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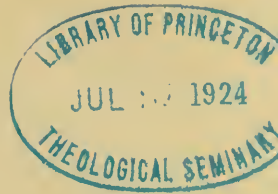
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SKETCHES



FROM THE

LIFE OF JESUS,

HISTORICAL AND DOCTRINAL

BY REV. E. W. THAYER

SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

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PREFACE.

It is an encouraging sign of the times, that so much study is devoted to the investigation of the ministry of the great exemplar, and no labor can be more pleasant and profitable than that so expended. Anything that can contribute to the life-like and realistic view of our Lord in his earthly ministry, is a lasting benefit to the race; as bringing him still nearer to us. Perhaps there may be foundation for a criticism of the LIVES OF JESUS lately offered to the public: that in them, attention is principally directed to the acts of his ministry, to the neglect of the doctrines so inseparably connected with his work, which give the history its whole interest. It is the doctrine that gives the sword its cutting edge, and its penetrating point. The bare incidents of the ministry form a monotonous and somewhat barren narrative. Doctrines are associated with his coming, which are asserted with unparalleled force by the simple presence of a divine actor in human life. These doctrines enforced with demonstration and insistence in the history, are the most important matters in the whole account. The present effort is an attempt to portray some of the leading incidents of the ministry in the light of the associated doctrines. The chronology of events is not closely followed in these papers, many occurrences having no connection nor interdependence; but standing alone, and dissociated from any thread of biography. If the following pages should stimulate any to a closer application to the sacred histories, and study of the great central figure, such a result will amply repay all the labor bestowed upon these essays.

E. W. T.



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CHAPTER I.

THE HISTORICAL IMPORTANCE

OF

JESUS OF NAZARETH.

The most remarkable personage, that has ever appeared on this earth, was Jesus of Nazareth. Obscure and short-lived as he was; since his time and by an influence emanating from him, the complexion of the world in every respect, political, social and religious, has been undergoing a gradual change, that will certainly culminate in a new order of things. Though centuries have been required to comprehend and apply the principles enunciated by him; yet their effect is already so visible, that we can forecast the period of their full development. The era of his advent was the sunrising of truth and knowledge; and from it date the decay of idolatry, the birth of real science, the amelioration of government, the extension of liberty, a permanent civilization, and an intelligible religion. Nature is revealing her closely-guarded secrets to Christian philosophy; and real science has established a bureau of discovery and invention: and is almost issuing a new revelation. Governments are becoming paternal, and the welfare of the individual man has become the supreme object of desire. What we see is but the beginning of the stream of influences proceeding from the Man of Nazareth, which, broadening and deepening like a river, has not yet reached its high-tide mark.

When we turn back to take a closer view of the person, from whom this force has emanated; we see one possessing not the splendor of a statesman or warrior, or even the

milder glory of a philosopher. We are at a loss to account for the fact, that one, so utterly destitute of everything attractive to the world, should evidently be the source and author of a movement, which is to issue in the entire renovation of human society. While he lived, every circumstance of his condition was such as to render him little and contemptible in the eyes of men. Poverty and meanness attached to his lot, such as have often led a proud man to disown his kindred, and blush to acknowledge a parent. Not only did the great and wise regard him with scorn; but the same feeling of contempt unaccountably swayed the multitude—a scorn which it required great moral courage in a disciple to face. Reproach was cast upon him such as to intimidate real and sincere friends; while fears for safety, and even for life, staggered the tried fidelity of disciples.

The spirit which animated him, the precepts and the doctrines which he taught, seem to us, as they did to the men of that age, above the level of our ordinary humanity; and beyond the reach of our attainment; and when we come to the tragic conclusion of his life, we are astonished at ourselves, that we feel not for him the common sympathy which suffering claims, and which, to bleeding innocence, is never refused. While the accusations and acts of his persecutors are utterly condemned by us; yet the poor tribute of our tears is refused to him; and he is altogether “without form and comeliness, and there is no beauty wherefore we should desire him.” Veiled, as he is, by poverty, reproach and rejection, yet his importance may be learned:

1. From the length of time his coming had been expected. The announcement to Adam of the appearance of a divine personage, who should also be the seed of the woman, who should crush the head of the old serpent, regain man's lost inheritance, and atone for human sin, was all that preserved him from the despair and enmity of a devil. The manner in which this atonement should be accomplished was probably set forth at the same time in the institution of the rite of sacrifice,—the first blood shed on the earth being the blood of the lamb, picturing the great substitute and his work. God's love forebore to condemn the race, and

appointed the great sin-bearer, who should atone by the shedding of his own blood.

Successive revelations, in time, all had reference to the predicted Savior; to the line of his descent, the period of his advent, and the nature of the work which he should accomplish. The most elaborate and particular preparations, extended through more than eighteen centuries, were made to identify him when he should appear,—preparations which rendered mistake impossible. It was the one vital thing to discover him when he came; the eyes of the world, Gentile, as well as Jew, looked with longing for his advent. Prophets, in their peculiar ecstasy, spoke wonderful words, which themselves but half understood, respecting him. A long line of them pointed forward, and proclaimed: "Behold, he cometh!" The mightiest of them was but a mere momentary voice, declaring: "Behold the Lamb of God!" No prophet was thus preannounced except John the Baptist, and he only on account of his close connection with the man of promise. As soon as Jesus of Nazareth had completed his course and established the dispensation; "the vision and the prophecy were sealed up." Heaven had no further communication to make.

Not only was he thus predicted by verbal announcement; but a system of typical and ceremonial institutions was established, and perpetuated for centuries; conveying additional knowledge and description of his character and work, defined more accurately than words could communicate, and above all suspicion of human device.

However men may regard him, in heaven he was known to be earth's only hope; the morning star that heralded the close of a night of endless despair; the bow of peace shining in front of the lowering and angry clouds of divine vengeance: the mediator, who reconciles, at the price of his own blood: "the lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."

2. His importance is discoverable from the change, which his appearance has produced. At his coming a new sun arose upon the world. Human science advances very slowly, and by a single step at a time—a single step in a generation or more. From him the light shone with the suddenness

of a theophany, and with a flood of brilliance. In the investigation of nature, man may extend his knowledge to indefinite limits; he may measure and weigh revolving globes, sound the depths of space, and penetrate the secrets of the universe with angel ken, but in morals he can make no discovery. All the world knows of morals and religion is contained in the teachings of the Nazarene. There is not an accredited truth but is contained in his sayings; not a sound maxim of morals but is found there. He flashes upon us in the gospels, teaching with no delegated authority, communicating no message emanating from a source superior to himself. His language is, "I say unto you," even while authoritatively expounding the law of God. Moses had not attained to the inculcation of a universal love to all men. Jesus says: "I say unto you, love your enemies"—a precept which has a force and life capable of yet subduing the world; a precept which none but he had the soul to utter.

For him to have spoken falsely or foolishly once, would have vitiated all his pretensions and proved him an impostor: but a divine wisdom sounds in all his words. He held the key of the whole revelation; and by him the Jewish system, which was the gospel in its bud stage, at once developed into the gorgeous glory of the flower. What discovery has since been made in religious science? All preceding prophets, and succeeding apostles and other teachers of the truth, are but as the pale moon, deriving from him what light they disseminate, and hiding their dim face when he appears.

Religion is the most important subject of investigation; and the history of the world shows, that if the minds of a people are confused and bewildered in their views of religious truth: they are also on all subjects of less importance. The absurd chimeras of blind superstition are associated with the lowest follies of cosmogony and philosophy. Religion is the keystone of the arch of knowledge: and nothing more contributes to the advancement of the human mind, and the excitement of all its powers, than a religion based on everlasting truth, able to endure the most critical examination, and requiring of men those duties which have their

foundation in eternal right. Let the mind be mystified here, and required to believe what is clearly contrary to common sense; and the door of all knowledge is closed at once. Correct religious views are thus connected with progress in science of every kind.

Jesus of Nazareth, our only teacher in morals, has thus not only given us a system of divine truth perfect in itself; but one whose reception is connected with all real advance in general knowledge. Science and arts flourish with it; and its extension is accompanied with the improvement in government, comforts and progress visible in Christian lands. Men become exalted and nations are great, *because* they believe in him.

3. His importance may be learned from the sensation which he produced. No individual has ever made such an impression on the world as Jesus of Nazareth. His record is written on the hearts of men in indelible characters.

A nation was never so moved by any personage, as was the Jewish nation by the humble and despised Nazarene. The rage of this people against him was unbounded. With the most determined energy he was rejected by them; they gnashed their teeth at the mention of his name; they pursued his followers with slaughter for his sake. From the time of their rejection of him, their national character underwent an entire change. It is possible for prejudice and passion to gain over men an influence so seated as to render them virtually insane. Pharaoh affords an instance. As we see him rush on the thick bosses of Jehovah's buckler, growing more desperate with every successive struggle, we are almost ready to inquire, is this man or demon? King Saul's history shows that passion may come to possess so mighty a disturbing force in the mental economy, as to be almost equivalent to madness. Such cases occur occasionally; but eighteen hundred years ago, the spectacle was presented of a whole nation stired to the bottom of their natures, and wild with demoniac rage against one whom they affected to despise. They became uncontrollable by Roman governors, fiercer than wolves against the name of Jesus; so that Paul would sooner be tried before Nero than at Jerusalem. They were "contrary to all men," and

movers of sedition wherever the name of Jesus was preached; and their fanaticism reached such a height, that it became necessary to the peace of the world, that Jerusalem should be destroyed.

This was not the usual policy of the Roman government: they never destroyed cities: they were wiser than to desolate fruitful countries, and obliterate mighty cities. In their whole history of seven hundred years, they had never doomed but one city to utter destruction and perpetual desolation. This was Carthage, a rival of Rome for the dominion of the world: nor were they hasty in reaching this conclusion respecting her. The intolerance and bitterness of the Jewish people had become such, that their national existence was incompatible with the peace of the world: but still, the masters of empire were lenient and slow in their procedure; and were forced into the contest by the ungovernable spirit of the deluded nation, who raised the standard of revolt, and themselves began the war. Even then it was not in the heart of Titus to desolate the country, or destroy the city or temple. The maniac fury of the entire population forced the ruin against the wishes of the Roman general. The victors found themselves compelled, by the spirit of the people themselves, to blot out the very name of their city, and leave a populous and flourishing country a scene of universal desolation.

The rebuilding of the city was forever forbidden, but forbidden in vain. The Romans themselves found it necessary to rebuild it, and preoccupy it as a military post; in order to keep it out of the hands of the turbulent and seditious remnant of the scattered nation, whose blood Adrian shed like water, making their metropolis a garrisoned fortress of their foes. No peace seemed possible for the world; until Jewish blood was lost in amalgamation with the great family of nations: an event destined in the decrees of Jehovah never to occur.

Now, what was the cause of all this prolonged passion? A poor and despised teacher had for the space of three or four years exercised his ministry among them: and never had such a convulsion of the human heart followed the career of mortal. The like had never been seen on earth.

before or since. The destruction of Jerusalem can be explained only by admitting the literal truth of the whole gospel story.

The name of Jesus stands thus engrossed on the pages of history, and furnishes the interpretation of the events of the time. Josephus describes his fellow-countrymen as a nation of madmen. He seems at a loss to account for their fearful corruption: and attributes the displeasure of Heaven against the guilty city to the crime of killing James, the Christian apostle resident; in such a manner as to show that he understood their national depravity to be connected, as an effect with its cause, with their opposition to the disciples of the Nazarene, whose name he declined to mention, but of whom he was pondering more deeply than he wrote. He evidently wondered at the leniency of Titus, and declares that had not the Romans destroyed Jerusalem; God would have consumed it, as Sodom, by fire from Heaven.

Moreover, never did a being on earth excite so deep affection as this Jesus. A continually increasing class of men, attended him, who loved him so as other being was never loved. For him they were willing to endure any suffering, not counting their lives even dear unto them. Poverty, hardship, and persecution had no terrors for them. No worldly temptation could seduce them. A living ideal was before them, whom they followed in the bloody way himself had trodden. Such men as the early Christians, so devoted to a service fraught with every danger, and offering no earthly reward, the world had never seen. And what was the formative cause of their character? The twelve had the advantage of all men, in being intimate associates of the Nazarene. They knew him thoroughly; they had passed with him through all the exciting scenes of his ministry. They had heard all his conversations and public discourses: had seen all his miracles, witnessed his crucifixion, and been transfixed by it. Having almost given him up for an impostor, and being sunk in the deepest stagnation of unbelief, and inexpressibly determined to listen to no further deception, they had yet been forced to admit the fact of his resurrection.

This fact corrected and enlarged their views, and imparted the faith and courage, at which all generations wonder. They had even seen him as a God ascend to his native heaven; and the everlasting doors admitted him.

As we look back through the ages at the long line of his followers, we see the generations immediately succeeding the apostles distinguished by a timid conscientiousness and an incredible self-denial. Many of the early Christian fathers were superstitious, weak, and foolish; but their weakness was the weakness of excessive conscientiousness. They had not learned the broad and liberal interpretation of their Lord's injunctions current in more modern days. The heretics of the time, also, none of them denied the existence and ministry of the Savior, or the facts of his career as related in the gospels. Three centuries dimmed the impression of his personality; before the Arian heresy, denying his divinity, took form.

Great men, borne on the wave of favoring circumstances, have shaped events, and left their own impress on their generation. Bonaparte accomplished such a result, but only by the aid of myriads, whose united force was guided by his own great talents. Jesus was unaided by any worldly influence. All the impression which he made was by simple example and teaching. The movement initiated by the mightiest of the sons of men is transient, often ephemeral; that begun by Jesus of Nazareth is destined to reach to the remotest ends of the earth, and to continue through all time.

4. His importance is discoverable from the miracles which he wrought. A miracle is a work of God himself operating immediately, and not through the established laws of nature. They are for the instant suspended; while the omnipotent will exerts its energy. Of course miracles are acts of God alone. The wonders of the Egyptian magicians were mere tricks of legerdemain. The witch of Endor was more terrified at the real appearance of Samuel than was Saul himself. She had never recalled one from the dead before.

The most essential point in the discussion of miracles is, that they were never wrought for the relief of human suf-

fering merely. Myriads of children have been born blind; we have no account of more than one or two, to whom sight has been restored. Millions of martyrs have been condemned to death, and have been left to die; no one has ever been delivered except the three Hebrews. The tomb has swallowed an innumerable host; one only has returned on whom its doors had closed.

If miracles were wrought for the relief of men chiefly, they would occur in every age. No emergency has ever been deemed sufficient to demand the visible interposition of Jehovah; but one in which his own honor has been vitally concerned. They are wrought for the cause and the honor of God only, and on no other account. Hence they have been confined to certain epochs: the establishment of a church on earth, when Israel came out of Egypt by miracle, and its continued preservation.

When miracles have been necessary in order to prevent the knowledge of God from being extinguished, or to defend the nation, the sole depository of his truth, from destruction; and no other course would suit the tremendous necessities of the occasion; the veil of natural law has been drawn aside; and Jehovah has stretched out his naked arm from behind the clouds and thick darkness of his throne for the defense and confirmation of his own truth. His people could not have been delivered from Egypt, sustained in the wilderness, and settled in Canaan, with the abiding conviction of those divine truths needful for the world, without the miracles which recorded and enforced them as with a pen of iron. None were wrought but on an occasion big with the honor of the Eternal Jehovah.

So, when the nation had almost utterly apostatized, and but a remnant of seven thousand remained faithful; and Elijah felt that he stood alone against the current of idolatry; God, in his own sovereign way, "turned their heart back to him," and forced the knowledge of himself upon a backslidden and reluctant people by miracle.

So, at Babylon, he secured by miracles the end, which in no other way could have been attained; recovered his apostate people; and made kings their nursing fathers, and their

queens nursing mothers. The number of such direct interpositions does not reach four score.

Miracles have ceased for eighteen hundred years. Nothing can occur of importance sacred enough to justify a supernatural interference: not the suffering of groaning millions, not the peril of nations or of the race. There exists but one cause of value sufficiently high and holy to call for a miracle: as there is but one purpose for which such a prodigy has ever occurred.

The life-time of Jesus and his apostles was an epoch marked by miracles above all others in the annals of time. He was the figure of the age. Heaven emptied out its inhabitants at his birth. The whole realm of nature felt and owned its Lord; and its laws, firm as the universe, gave way at the word of one clothed in our humanity. Every class of intelligent beings, angels, devils and men: every department of creation, earth, sea and sky; every evil and every good, bowed to him, and acknowledged his supremacy. The number of his mighty works was too great for record; the world could not contain the books.

All the wonders which God has ever wrought, had they clustered around one age and one individual, were inferior to the works which attended Jesus of Nazareth, and designated him as the Messiah. If the works effected by prophets proved them to be what they claimed to be, commissioners of Jehovah; we must, by the same rule, receive Jesus for what he professed to be. All these prodigies were not so striking as was the mysterious being himself whose word effected them. It was not the works so much as his manner, his word, and his sublime consciousness of "all power."

Now a miracle never lies. We may innocently doubt the statement of the best of men on some occasions; but a miracle commands our implicit faith at once. We cannot question without rejecting the authority of Almighty God. No matter how little the miracle may appear to us, if it be only the rod of Moses becoming a serpent—Pharaoh disregarded it at the peril of his kingdom and his life. If we refuse the testimony of the works to the divinity of Jesus, we do so at the peril of our souls.

5. His importance is learned from the triumph of his religion. His is the only eternal religion. Its object of worship, its requirements, nor its doctrinal axioms have undergone change since the first institution in the Garden of Eden. It is the only religion that has been extended by reason, conviction and the irresistible force of truth. The sword of conquerors, or the preponderance of nations has disseminated other forms of faith and worship, which have never owed their prevalence to argument and conviction. A great facility of change in religions has sometimes shown itself in the revolutions of states. Christianity is not an external dress that can thus be put on or put off. It meets a barrier of resistance in the human soul strong as that which bounds the sea. Each of its doctrines is unpalatable; all of its precepts are too rigid; and its great central truth is "foolishness:" so astounding, that the mind cannot receive it; and so sanctifying that the corrupt soul rejects it. A religion revealing things so strange respecting God, and requiring of men things so impracticable, will never extend; unless based on impregnable truth and right. Let Gamaliel's rule be applied, and a better cannot be suggested: "If this thing be of God ye cannot overthrow it." Its claims have survived the severest scrutiny, and it has lived down every enemy.

The Jewish nation set itself against it, and it withered away like the barren fig-tree, dried up to the very roots. The fourth beast of Daniel, "diverse from all others, with claws of brass and teeth of iron, tearing the prey and stamping the residue with its feet," placed itself in determined hostility to Christ: and its power was broken, and its ten fragments are scattered over Europe,

The ecclesiastical beast, its successor in the persecution of Christianity, that "looked like a lamb and spake as a dragon," still sits upon the seven hills; but its day is evidently coming. One more vial remains to be poured out to introduce the end.

Alone of all religions appealing to reason and fact, Christianity has met the stoutest intellectual resistance. Not only has the enemy endeavored to burn it out; but to write it down; ridicule it out of society; to find weapons against

it in every natural science; but his efforts have ever failed. It has steadily progressed. If God has permitted the Roman apostate to dam up the waters of healing for 1260 years; it has been that their force may be collected; and that, when the barrier at length gives way, they may at once overspread the world. Its enemies, intent on its destruction, like the Jewish priests who watched the sepulchre of the great Redeemer, have not only been; but will continue to be the unwilling instruments of extending the knowledge of it, and increasing its glory.

Time, then, has set its seal. Gamaliel, who saw it in its gloomiest struggles, and felt how unlikely it was to live and prevail, is, by his own prescribed rule, convinced that it is of God. It conquered in Jerusalem, which was a greater achievement than the subsequent change in the empire from heathen to Christian.

Let the world overlook Jesus and undervalue his work: his coming renders this earth more famous than all else that ever transpired upon it. An importance attaches to him beyond our power to express or conceive. Veiled as his glory is by poverty, reproach and suffering; if the expectation of four thousand years can prove matchless dignity; if to be the one object to which stands pointing every miracle of time, and with which is connected every inspired message ever uttered, shows worth: if, with his blood, to be able to extinguish quenchless fires, cleanse the guilty conscience, and satisfy inexorable justice, demonstrates excellence; then in Jesus Christ is glory. It may be but a dim twilight of the sun of righteousness that we behold here; the full blaze of his effulgence will forever enlighten the world of glory.

CHAPTER II.

REASONS FOR THE DELAY OF THE ADVENT.

Gal. iv. 4: But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law.

That, after the fall of man, so long a time should elapse before the advent of the promised Redeemer, has ever been a matter of the gravest astonishment to all inquirers. At least four thousand years, or, according to the Septuagint, five thousand years, of ignorance, crime and ruin dragged their slow length along a track of blood and butchery, pollution and lust, before the arrival of the long looked for Savior. Kingdoms rose, and flourished, and fell; mighty empires ruled like wild beasts let loose for carnage, and sunk at last exhausted from internal decay, giving way to other powers still more terrible than themselves. A midnight intellectual darkness prevailed: and in vain reason inquired, and philosophy dogmatized. No condition can be conceived more sad than that of the human race left to the gloom of perfect ignorance about the God above them, and the future before them; suffering under the scourge of political tyranny; and exhausting themselves in never-ceasing wars: for the history of the ancient world is a history of war only. The individual was worth just as much as his bodily strength and physical courage availed: and thus was estimated only as an animal. Intellectual and spiritual life were hardly taken into account.

Often has the heart of the Christian been pained with the inquiry, why was this unaccountable delay in the coming of the promised deliverer? Why were so many generations of men left to descend, in unbroken succession, down to the shades of everlasting death? Shall the world pass more than half its appointed period of continuance before the

way of salvation becomes perfectly revealed?--and a score of centuries more, before the tidings reach the entire population of the globe? While we enjoy the full-orbed light of divine revelation, conscious that we are no better by nature than the ancients, a feeling of wonder, and almost of complaint, that the world should so long be left to the darkness of heathenism, causes us to reflect harshly upon the almighty Creator, whose love and power are equally without limit.

Can a satisfactory answer be found to such inquiries, which unavoidably arise in our minds? Can the universal love of God be vindicated from all impeachment in the case? "But when the fulness of time was come." God is in no haste in carrying out his plans; haste belongs to weakness and uncertainty. But while he waits for the period "fully" to arrive, the destinies of millions are being settled for unending misery. While we bow with hearty submission to his arrangement of all things, can relief be found at all from the difficulties of the situation?

1. Christ came as soon as idolatry had lost its hold upon any considerable portion of mankind. This is the sin of sins; as it strikes most directly at the glory of God; denies his supremacy; and deprives him of the worship which is his due. Atheism and idolatry make their attack upon the very throne of the Great Creator, and refuse an acknowledgment of his most sacred rights; but atheism is not congenial to the feelings of humanity; and has nothing with which to captivate the imagination, and inflame the passions of the soul. Idolatry, on the other hand, satisfies the craving for something to worship; excites the imagination to the highest degree; entrenches itself in the superstitions; and takes a hold upon the heart not to be broken by argument, or demonstration, even. It is an assault upon the dearest prerogatives of Jehovah, and aims its blow at the very vitals of divinity. It is a sin of which devils are not guilty, as they believe and tremble; but it roots deep in the corrupt nature of man, until "they become mad upon their idols;" and refuse to receive correction.

Its malignity is directed against God, and against God alone. Therefore, the second and most fearful command of the decalogue is uttered against idolatry: "Thou shalt not

make unto thee any graven image, nor any likeness of any thing that is in the heavens above, nor in the earth beneath, nor in the waters under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor worship them: for I, the Lord, thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of them that hate me."

Idolatry springs from a hatred of the true God: and for it God will visit, not the punishment, but the iniquities of the fathers upon the children. His heaviest judgment is divine desertion and abandonment to the full power of evil. In no other way can he express his unutterable abhorrence of idolitry. For it he will forsake a nation, till whole generations go down in unbroken column to the pit; neither will he turn from the fierceness of his anger: till the hearts of the people are turned from their sin. In every generation "it has repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth; and it has grieved him at his heart;" but it has made no change in his administration. His name is "Jealous," and no word could more forcibly express the keenness of his scrutiny, and the determined vengeance of his retribution. In the days of the prophets, argument, ridicule and reason were used in vain against this sin. All that could be done was to testify against it, and leave the evil to correct itself.

After ages of the worship of false gods, this was accomplished: the evil did correct itself: and in this wise. The very excess of superstition became its own antidote. The Roman senate adopted the gods of all the conquered nations, and installed them in their own pantheon, as lawful objects of worship. They thus collected a host of divinities, contrary in their characters, opposite in their attributes, in irreconcilable conflict with each other: and all of them proper objects of worship. The vote of the Roman senate was all that was needed to make a new god; and into the number they proceeded to introduce mere mortal men; and some of the basest of men and most infamous of women became gods and goddesses; and received divine worship at the majority vote of a few fallible men.

At the period of the advent, religion had degenerated into the worship of the reigning emperor, mainly. Indeed, all the members of the imperial family were deified; some of them whom, living, the world could not endure. At the time of the appearance of Christ, idolatry had run itself out, was played out, as is said in the west; it was suffering a *reductio ad absurdum*; its strength was broken, and there was a decided and prevailing reaction toward monotheism among the philosophers and the people also. Idolatry had begun to destroy itself; and the great heart of humanity was yearning after the true and living God; and this was the proper time for his interposition.

As soon as "men returned and inquired early after God," he was to be found of them. He meets the cravings of his children whenever a sincere and honest desire for him springs up within them.

We have an illustration in point in the history of modern missions. When Christians in America were moved to send missionaries to the Sandwich Islands, the event proved that God's hand was in the measure. The great king of the islands, Kamehameha I., had died; and the inhabitants of all the islands, without incitement from abroad, of their own motion, agreed to have no more idols and idol worship, which had been usually attended with human sacrifices. A strong reaction had set in from the excessive and cruel idolatry of the reign just ended. Accordingly a large assembly convened, and solemnly broke down the images hitherto held inviolably sacred; and by vote abandoned idolatry.

God had prepared messengers of his own truth who were already on their way, when this spontaneous reformation occurred: and the missionaries soon arriving were filled with unbounded astonishment to find the islanders no longer cruel idolaters; but in a posture of mind somewhat prepared for the reception of the gospel. This case is nearly enough parallel to show, that the abandonment of idolatry is met at once with the favor of heaven, and the speedy revelation of saving truth to the former devotees of error. The result in the islands, after some years of labor and enlightenment, was a revival of more Pentecostal

power, than has been seen any where on earth probably for eighteen centuries. So it was when Christ came; idolatry had proved its own emptiness and insufficiency.

The Jews scattered abroad everywhere bore their continual testimony to the one only living and true God; and the yearning heart of the world was listening with an abandonment of former absurdities, and an earnest longing for a divine reality. The world was in the posture of attention; the heavens, heretofore closed against all appeals of sinful mortals, opened at last to send down the long expected deliverer. God's honor forbade his being sent at any time previous. While the angel announced his birth to the Jews, the miraculous star proclaimed it to all the world. During all this time God loved the world with a love incapable of increase; he felt as intense pity, as tender mercy; but for his own name's sake, waited until men were turning away from the husks, and, remembering that they had a Father, were longing for the bread of his house.

The infatuation of idolatry is more complete than any other delusion ever experienced, and requires ages to dissolve it; but the darkness was slowly yielding. The estrangement of the human soul from God is more determined, lasting and obstinate than any other alienation possible to man. It resists longer, requires more continued pressure, and yields only when the alternative is utter ruin and destruction. Idolatry had been followed to the bitter end, and proved to be absurdity itself; and to have no soul-satisfying good to communicate. Only experience of its emptiness could teach.

2. Philosophy was willing to acknowledge its ignorance and ask for light. The principal characteristic of the ancient philosophy was pride and self-assertion; its reasoning was altogether a priori. Instead of sitting humbly at the feet of nature, and inquiring as a perfectly ignorant learner: she assumed the airs of consummate wisdom, and was ready to dictate and dogmatize rather than be instructed. Her inquiries of course were altogether fruitless; and served only to plunge her followers into still deeper darkness. Like the Pythian priestess, intoxicated by the fumes of the

cavern in the temple of Delphi; her oracles were only guesses, and her inspiration came from below. Endless discussion had been made respecting the origin of all things, the end for which man existed, the summum bonum, and the future life, if immortality there were. Discussion settled nothing; it only made the darkness palpable.

As the case stands, either matter is eternal, and the world has always existed in something like its present form; or there is an intelligent creator. A fortuitous concourse of atoms, occurring at any period to form the present world with its occupants, without an intelligent director to commence and supervise the process, is unthinkable: and is much like the evolution of the present day without an operator. There is but one alternative, really: there is an outside creator and president: or the world is eternal. The idea of such a being was too mighty a conception to be admitted: and being destitute of this truth, which is the premise of all reasoning, the discussion of the wise men ended in determining absolutely nothing.

Indeed, it seems to be true that when Christ came, there was no fixed or influential belief even in the immortality of the soul; to say nothing of the existence of a spiritual, intelligent creator, prevailing in the world. The Jews, dispersed to all countries under heaven, gave their continuous testimony on all these subjects; and many an aching Gentile heart consorted with them, like Lydia, the widow of the book of Acts, who was drawn to the Jewish house of prayer by the river side, where she went for comfort in listening to those who prayed to the one living and true God. Philosophy even turned her ear to catch the Jewish teachings; and we are, beyond measure, astonished in reading Plato's disquisitions about God and his three-fold personality. His mention of the three elements [goodness, intelligence and soul] as persons, thrills us with wonder.

At the same time, we are not astonished that a great mass resigned themselves to stoicism, which is nothing but stony-hearted Fatalism: submitting to receive whatever might happen to them without murmuring and without feeling. Stoicism turns the heart to rock, making it incapable of any tender feeling toward God, and hardening it

against all the sufferings of this life. It is not astonishing that, in the Roman world, stoicism should have many followers; consonant as it is to the sturdy, harsh and cruel Roman character.

In all this mental movement there was a progress toward monotheism; and the idea of an intelligent Creator was becoming more easy of acceptance. Polytheism forbids and destroys the conception of a Creator altogether. The world was "feeling after God, if haply they might find him." The voice of humanity was uttered by the woman of Samaria, when she said: "We know that Messias cometh, who is called Christ: when he is come he will tell us all things." We have listened too eagerly to the siren voice of philosophy; it has no revelations to make; the philosopher knows no more than the peasant.

When the photographer's plate is taken by him out of the camera, where the light of the sun has impressed it, nothing absolutely can be seen upon its surface. It is hurried into a darkened room; and after the developing mixture has been poured upon it, an image begins gradually to appear, and becomes every moment more and more distinct. So, the mind of humanity was beginning to show anew the obliterated image of God.

The belief in one living and true God is a prime necessity, without which we cannot entertain belief in a creation, a providence, or even in a future immortality. No human eye was strong enough to pierce the tremendous gloom that hung around the grave; and while there was felt a sad foreboding of the dread future, of which no man can divest himself, yet certainty did not seem attainable.

Philosophy was no longer regarded as a reliable teacher. All the interests of the world and of time dwarf into insignificance when compared with these questions of dire import: and long waiting began to intensify the longing after sure knowledge. The world, sensible at length of its ignorance, was ready to hear the voice from heaven; and even philosophy bowed its ear to listen. It recalled the traditions, that were still preserved in the midst of heathenism, of a coming one, who was to overcome the serpent, restore our lost inheritance, and introduce the golden age. In the

eighth eclogue of Virgil humanity is heard sighing for relief, and reviving the memory of long-slumbering hopes, built on the faint remembrance of the almost forgotten prophecies of Eden.

It is matter of astonishment how long it takes to awaken desires after God, and how great and multiplied afflictions and grief are necessary to soften and tender the heart: but the process was being conducted by one to whom nothing is impossible.

3. The oppression of the civil power had reached its climax. The dominion of Rome was endured, because it could not be resisted. In the counsels of the skies it was necessary that such a power as the Roman, so stern, so merciless, yet a power of law and justice and order, should get the undisputed ascendancy, and realize as nearly as possible universal empire. At the time of the advent, Rome was mistress of the known world: and her irresistible legions held the nations at peace. Vain were all leagues and coalitions formed against her, and she dictated terms according to her pleasure to the peoples of far off countries, as well as those near. Her rule was indeed a rule of iron.

As Daniel saw the four beasts in his vision of the empires of the earth, the feet of the first were as the feet of a man, so mild was its dominion. An acknowledgment of its supremacy, and a light tribute was all that was required of a subject nation. But the fourth beast had claws of brass and teeth of iron; it tore and divided and reconstructed at its will. Herod's kingdom was torn into four tetrarchies, with little regard to the affinities and relations of the inhabitants: and in like manner throughout the world, limits were defined, boundaries adjusted and provinces arranged to suit the convenience of Roman governors. No tie of kindred, descent, nor community of language was considered, so much as the ease of military approach, and accessibility from the imperial city.

Division was the order of the time; and then the Roman monster "stamped the residue with his feet;" as good a description in brief as could be given. Judea, exhausted by the cruel government of Herod, craved to be

made a Roman province; only to learn that the little finger of Rome was thicker than Herod's loins. The taxation imposed was beyond anything known in modern times, amounting to from ten to twenty per cent. of net income. And then the method of collection, the same practiced by the Turkish government at the present day, was such that the government was sure of obtaining all it claimed, while the collecting officers had all possible opportunity of extortion. The fortunes with which procurators and proconsuls returned from the provinces exceeded computation almost; and showed that the life blood of subject kingdoms had been coined to fill the coffers of favorites of the emperor or of the senate.

Under this stern rule, however, the nations were in perfect peace: the sword was rusting in its scabbard, and helmet and spear and shield were for show and not for use, during the life of the prince of peace. The sea, out of which the great beasts had arisen, representing the seething, agitated humanity, ceased its raging; the fierce winds of war were hushed: and the sceptre of iron waved over a prostrate world.

While the dominion of Rome so oppressed the nations; it yet unified the world, and harmonized it into the semblance of one family. The remains of international roads and bridges existing to the present day, show that great and constant intercourse was taking place between widely separated provinces. As to the topmost and most distant leaf of a tree, there is a direct capillary connection with the deeply hidden root from which it derives its life; so each spot of earth took direction from Rome. Its rulers were men of great ideas: and gave themselves to the affairs of the wide world.

When we further consider that there was, as it were, one universal language, superseding by its copiousness and fulness all others,—the language of literature, of cultivation, of the arts, and of trade and commerce,—we easily see that the whole world had almost become one family: and that the vibrations of each stirring event made themselves felt to the ends of the earth. This state of things came about in the all-wise arrangements of heaven, preparatory

to the great event of time, the birth of the child, the giving of the son, who should be called "The Wonderful."

It was in the fulness of time; the world was fully ripe for the event. The clock of destiny had struck the hour: God is in no haste about his special operations. It was not proper to send him forth a mature man like Adam in the day of his creation; but he "was made of a woman:" of the flesh and blood of the Virgin Mary; that "he might be in all points like his brethren." He passed through all the stages of human life from the cradle to the grave. He felt the infirmities and temptations of every period. He sounded the depths of human experience.

His brethren, *i. e.*, his relatives who had been brought up with him, knew that he was a man like themselves, and thought for a long time that he was nothing more,—beautiful, gifted and peculiar indeed, but still a man, so perfectly conformed was he to our humanity. His fellow-townsmen had observed him for thirty years; and they knew that he was a man; and thought that he was only a man, blessed with the highest endowments. And such he was in all respects, sin excepted. His enemies charged: "thou being a man, makest thyself God." All saw that he was really and truly man; and there is in this profound mystery a spring of comfort ever fresh and ever new.

"He was made under the law," *i. e.*, subject to the condemnation of the law; "in the likeness of sinful flesh," one of the guilty race; "that he might redeem them that were under the condemnation of the law." To redeem means to buy them out from that condemnation, which he did by giving his own life and soul a substitute for theirs, and an equivalent for their deliverance. He paid the whole debt: God exacted the uttermost farthing; and no deduction was made from the penalty in consideration of the eminence and purity and holiness of the sufferer. The law obtained its full demands, and was honored, when he, who is above all law, became subject to it: and it was "magnified" when he yielded his soul an offering for sin.

CHAPTER III.

THE BIRTH OF JESUS.

“The fulness of time” was at hand. A fulness of demonstration had been made that no remedy could be found for the disorders and miseries of humanity. The tendency of society was ever towards a corruption, whose progress finally dissolved the most firmly cemented states. Civilization and philosophy had exhausted their force in a vain attempt to arrest the downward current. “Thou hast no healing medicines.”

The weary world was recalling the ancient traditions of the race, and looking with eager eyes for some disclosure from above, which should afford a firm basis for belief, and a sure ground of hope for the impenetrable, frowning future after the present life.

Other worlds than ours were also in the posture of keen expectation. The eternal principles of the divine government needed elucidation. A barrier needed to be erected against the further progress of evil, which had already contaminated two races of beings, and was threatening a farther advance.

God makes his beginning of the work of recovery in the most obscure corner of the Holy Land, and in a family reduced to the lowest straits. The heir of a once illustrious name was toiling for a precarious living in the remote city of Nazareth. The prestige of the family was gone; and it had no inheritance except the hope of a future deliverer, who was, according to prophecy, to arise like a little stem out of the root of its decayed stump. Joseph was an humble artisan and a righteous man; and had espoused to himself an estimable virgin of the same blood with himself, the two representing the separate lines of descent from the Shepherd King.

When the angel Gabriel, six months after his message to Zacharias in the temple, announced to the Virgin Mary her coming maternity, and the birth of the promised seed from herself, it was the most astounding news that could be communicated: agreeing, however, with the vision of Zacharias, of which she and all of the nation were cognizant. As her thoughts reverted at once to this previous heavenly visitation; the angel gave her a sign by which she might know that his words would be fulfilled in their season. This sign was the condition in which she should find her cousin Elizabeth, well stricken in age like Sara, Abraham's wife, far beyond such a possibility: yet advanced six months in a state of pregnancy. This Mary hastened to verify, not in order to determine her faith, but to strengthen it.

Some one of the great annual feasts was at hand, probably the Feast of the Dedication, in the tenth month, when the whole country would be in motion; and she could join a caravan to Jerusalem; and at the termination of the feast, accompany the old priest Zacharias, with another caravan, to his home in the hill country of Judea. The Feast of Dedication is selected: because in years, when the Pentecost, a movable feast, occurred late; exactly six months would reach to the Feast of Dedication, which would be held three months before an early passover: and these would be the three months of winter, a convenient time for a protracted visit.

If this supposition should prove correct, the birth of John occurred shortly after a passover, and the birth of Jesus in the early days of September. Indeed, it is necessary wholly to repudiate the twenty-fifth of December as the day of the nativity. A natural reason always existed for the observance of that day. It is the oldest holiday of the world, established as such by the sun-worshipping nations of antiquity, to whom it was the chief festival of the year. Cortez was amazed to find it observed by the Aztecs of Mexico, who were sun-worshippers. It celebrates the return of the sun from its southern progress, being the first day on which it perceptibly returns towards the north; and so, the first day that lengthens. Unacquainted, as the ancient world was, with the causes of the sun's apparent mo-

tion, its return was hailed with the highest joy, as assuring another succession of seasons. The Pope has evidently attempted to wrest the day from a pagan and idolatrous celebration: and consecrate it to the memory of the great fact in the Christian history. Of course he is no authority in matters of chronology.

The faith of Mary must have been immensely strengthened on learning the condition of Elizabeth, and hearing the predicted character and office of her son; his birth corresponding exactly to that of Isaac, the child of promise and of laughter. The sign given by the angel did establish, beyond the possibility of doubt, the fulfillment of his words respecting herself. Possibly the babe in the womb of the the aged matron gave its first energetic evidence of life at the sound of Mary's voice.

The intimacy of these two holy women for three months was as close as could exist between mortals, bound together as they were by ties of kindred, and also associated in the accomplishment of the greatest trust ever committed to creatures. With no other could Mary hold unreserved intercourse. These great secrets were "kept in their hearts, and pondered" there.

In due time Mary returned to Nazareth, through Jerusalem, in the course of one of the great convocations of the nation; where she remained for six months; until the decree of the master of the Roman world called her to Bethlehem, the city of her ancestors, for enrolment. A better translation of Luke ii: 2, can be suggested, to be made by placing the adjective immediately before its noun with which it is associated. The verse would then read: "this first enrolment was made under Quirinius, governor of Syria," implying a second, when the tax was enforced, also under the government of the same Quirinius. An inscription has been found in Rome, from the tomb of this Roman senator: *Bis Syriæ imperator auctore Augusto*. The birth of Jesus was thus coincident with the first Roman census of Judea; and his appearance as a son of the law at twelve years of age, was synchronous with the appearance of the first Roman procurator of Judea; when the sceptre dropped from

the hands of Jewish administration, and the lawgiver ceased forever from between the feet of Judah.

As we read in Josephus of the slaughter of Bagoas, it is impossible to refrain from connecting it with the departure of the magi from Judea, without communicating with Herod. In that chapter of history we find so many references to matters contained in Luke's account,—such as a plain allusion to this enrolment, with which Herod had united an oath of loyalty to himself; the refusal of the rigid Pharisees to take the required oath to Herod, as expecting the speedy advent of their own king Messias; the predictions freely made, that the government of the Herods would soon terminate; the expected appearance of the looked-for prince of Israel, who, instead of being born of a virgin, should be begotten by a eunuch; Herod's vindictive jealousy, leading him to slaughter Pharisaic leaders, as well as some of the inmates of his own palace; justifying the remark of Luke, that "he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him"—as to suggest that he was writing of that commotion which led to the massacre of the innocents at Bethlehem, the mention of which we might expect Josephus to avoid.

If this be so, Jesus must have been born two or three years before the death of Herod, and six or seven years before the A. D. This would place the date of the nativity at the very time of the remarkable planetary conjunction announced by Kepler, whose recurrence in A. D. 1603 and 4 led him to devote himself to the study of astronomy. It was then witnessed by thousands, crowding the streets of Stockholm night after night. The same configuration of stars graced the sky at the time of the birth of Moses, as Josephus relates, and led to attempts to murder the child. According to Kepler, this group was not itself the star of Bethlehem; but the miraculous star associated itself as one of the cluster, forming a coronet that would attract the gaze of the world. The visit of the Eastern astrologers to Jerusalem, only gave to the phenomenon its true and designed interpretation.

I. The first notable fact in the gospel history is the extreme poverty of the wedded pair from whom the Messias was to descend. And to be poor in that age meant more than

it does now, and in republican America: it meant to be down-trodden and despised beyond any present example. The low condition to which Mary was reduced, seemed to forbid the expectation of such remarkable exaltation. Her song of gratitude and joy expresses in varied forms her unqualified amazement; that herself, so utterly sunken and scorned, should be selected by the God of Israel as the highly favored among women, whom all generations should call blessed. She speaks as one who had felt the sting of the world's contempt, and experienced the slights so freely bestowed on fallen greatness. The lowest menial in King David's service had been in easier circumstances than herself; yet the blood of royalty was in her veins: and to her husband, by right of primogeniture, belonged the fallen throne of the monarch, to whom God had promised, that he should never lack an heir to occupy his royal seat: and now he could move on an hour's notice: and by the help of a single animal, and on his own sturdy shoulders, could carry his wife and child, household furniture and the tools of his trade. Their only heritage seemed to be the pride of a great name: the possession of which, without the means of upholding it, provokes neglect rather than veneration.

Yet poor as they were, angels ever hung around their pathway: and before dangers could harm them, messengers of safety flew to give warning. The gold was poured into Mary's lap just before she needed it: and it was literally true of them that, having Christ, all things were theirs. Though they hardly comprehended the fact, they were the centre toward which the gaze of an admiring heaven was turned; and with them was the secret into which "angels desire to look." These shining ones never stopped at the doors of palaces; but haunted the obscure places where duty led this humble pair, whose wants were provided for before they were felt, and from whom every blow was warder before it struck.

Could our own private history be written by the pen of a ministering angel; it might be as full of heavenly ministries, whose source and arrangement are unsuspected by us. The young lions roar and seek their meat from God:

he feeds the ravens when they cry: and before the shaft aimed at a sparrow can take effect, the decree must be countersigned with the name of the great father, who permits the deed.

II. The place of the nativity was not the public inn. Some of the missionaries, seeing the rude accommodations of the oriental caravanserai, seem to have concluded that it must have been the place where the memorable birth occurred: but it was evidently some small and miserable stable, which had never before been the lodging place for human beings; where none were beside themselves, and no eye of man cared to look; where the virgin received no ministry of female attendance: but after the painless delivery, herself took all the care of the frail little babe, its washing, salting and wrapping in cloths previously prepared; and was able to arise from the earthen floor and deposit her charge in one of the mangers of stone, after cleaning it of the straw left by the feeding cattle.

No other babe was housed so poorly. This was the sign given by the angel to the shepherds: there is but one child to be found wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger; and that is the child of promise. Jehovah was saying: "let all the angels of God worship him:" but he seemed too mean for human homage. Men might have turned from him in haughty disgust: troops, however, of glorious ones, who stand in the sunlight of the eternal throne, were hovering about the stony bed; as they afterwards stood ready to bear him up in their hands, lest he dash his foot against a stone.

That the spot where a vagrant family sheltered for a time, should be identified after three hundred years of oblivion; especially after the storm of war had swept the works of man away with the besom of destruction, is not likely; nor that the stable should prove to be a cave twenty feet under ground; the most unlikely spot in the whole territory of Bethlehem. Its gaudy marble floor is rather polluted than hallowed by the kisses it has received. The same care which provided, that the sepulchre of Moses should not be known to this day: lest it become a centre of idolatrous pilgrimage, has also provided, that no trace or foot-

print should be left of the mighty visitor, whose presence here has made this earth famous next to heaven itself. There remains not a foot of territory in the whole holy land of which we can say, here he once trod.

III. The manner of the publication of this birth is also amazing. The little city was at the time filled to overflowing with the great families of the house of David, and the princes of the tribe of Judah. Every corner was occupied by the very pride of Israel: but unto none of these was the angel, charged with the proclamation, sent. At a little distance outside, the sheep, either belonging to the residents of the city or designed for the temple use, were watched by hireling shepherds, who are thus described by one familiar with them and with the country.

“The shepherd belongs to the lowest class of the population. In his filth, no American lady would admit him to her back kitchen. His clothing, hanging from his shoulders, is coarser than a rag-carpet; and his naked limbs and flesh, seen through the rents of his cloak, are of the color of a baconham or side meat. Everything we see here demonstrates to us more and more the extreme poverty and humility of the surroundings of our Lord in his life upon the earth.” Four of these men herding their flocks together, divided the watches of the night: they were sleeping on the ground in the open; the very poorest company that could be selected in the neighborhood. It is not known that they had any recommendation other than their low condition. The supposition that they were of a higher class than ordinary, or that they were devout expectants is but a supposition. They were simply plain, honest rustics, capable of bearing testimony.

They were surprised by a sudden glory which awakened the sleepers, and may have brought them all to their feet: when they became conscious of the presence of a visitant from the spirit world, standing near them. The sight, of course, filled them with mighty fear, which was probably shown by their retreating movements and terror-stricken look. The angel appeared in just the same manner in which Jesus appeared to his disciples after his resurrection. He was unexpectedly standing at their side. He was not

suspended in the air above their heads, but his feet were on the ground; and he seemed the centre and origin of the supernatural light.

Had all the host that were present flashed into view simultaneously, the sight had been overpowering. Therefore but one was seen; and his splendor was subdued, as it were; and he hastened to calm their fears, and assure them that his errand was one of peace and joy to them and all the people. His words were: "Fear not, for behold I bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all the people; for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ, the Lord." No sooner were the words out of his mouth, than there flashed into view a great host of unseen listeners; who may have filled the air, or rested on the ground, we know not which; but a refrain of the heavenly song burst from breasts that could no longer re-train their joy. In Christ there is as glorious a revelation to angels as to men.

Exalted spirits, sons of light, had been hurled from high seats in glory, on the first appearance of the taint of corruption upon them; and themselves had, like Moses, exceedingly feared and quaked at the thunderings and lightnings of the eternal throne. To them it had seemed impossible that Jehovah should pass by iniquity, transgression and sin. His hostility to evil had shown itself fiercer than consuming fire, and unquenchable. Mercy seemed an attribute, that could not coexist with his fearful holiness, justice and truth.

The happiness of spirits arises from the soul-humbling knowledge of God: "To know him is eternal life." The revelation of his mercy opened to them new discoveries in the divine nature more overwhelming, more ravishing than all the experiences of a past eternity. The offering of himself by Christ as the Redeemer of men, let floods of light into the minds of seraphim and cherubim, and sent deeper throbs of delight into celestial souls. How they watched the development of the great plan, not dumb with awful wonder, but burning in an ecstasy of love and joy! They had never fathomed the depth of the divine compassion, or

comprehended the tenderness of its yearnings, or received the news, that God is love.

These morning stars had hailed the advent of the new born earth with shouts of joy, as the future theatre of the great revelation; and had now accompanied the monarch of the skies from his throne of glory, to take up his residence in the body of this little babe; and make him the tabernacle of the shehinah. Their appearance on the plains of Bethlehem stamps this birth as the event of time. The being, who assumed the humanity of the child, came from the highest heaven; to which he ascended when his work was finished. This song of angels is but the prelude of another song which will make melody for the ears of God himself, which angels cannot sing; but those only who have been redeemed by blood divine. In that song all parts will be carried, from the finest infant treble, to the deep basso of those who have tasted the bitterness of misery and sin, and wrung out their very dregs.

Testimonies to this extraordinary birth were of the most surprising nature. Angel visits had, at times, been vouchsafed during the former ages; but they had been of rarely more than a single celestial messenger; on this occasion there came a multitude of the heavenly host to worship the infant King, and proclaim him. Epochs are spoken of which should be of sufficient importance to be attended with "signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars." Certainly no period more pregnant with great results ever passed, than that connected with the incarnation; and none so demanding the attention of heaven and earth. A great cycle of the ages was rolling in. God has inaugurated all such mighty cycles by a creation. (The first was that of the fish, followed by that of the reptile, and by that of the fowl, and by that of the quadruped, and finally by that of man.) These cycles have been introduced, not by evolutions, but by creations; all proceeding in a gradation upward to man, who is the model toward which all previous forms had worked. When the new era was introduced, it was ushered in by a creation. The "*novus ordo seclorum*" came in by a creation in the womb of a virgin of the house of David. Humanity was entering upon a new

stage; and the power of the Highest was introducing a new element and preparing an advance. It is his to inaugurate the eras. He might have sent his son equipped with a human body in the full maturity of its powers, as was Adam; but as the soul is probably united to its fleshly tabernacle at birth or before; so our Lord, in order to assume a rational soul as well as a material body, entered life at the same door with us all. This course seems to have been required in order that he might become a perfect man as respects the soul as well as the body, and "be made in all things like unto his brethren." Thus he went through all the weaknesses and pains of infancy and childhood and youth; and experienced all the temptations incident to every stage of life. It is impossible to conceive of a wiser and better way of introducing him into the race, and making him one with us in every respect; indeed it was the only way; much as human wisdom may scoff at it.

That he was born in Bethlehem was written in blood. An occasion marked by arbitrary bloodshed is not soon forgotten; especially if it be the wholesale destruction of unoffending babes. By the advent of the wise men, Jerusalem was as well informed of his presence; as it would have been, had the shining angel proclaimed it in the palace of the old king; and had there led in the heavenly song. These things must have appealed to the irrepressible longings and expectations of the Jewish people with convincing power. The Asmonean family had become extinct, its last member having perished by unnatural violence, at the recital of which humanity shudders; and the heart of the nation turned to the house of David with an eagerness, intensified by the odiousness of the tyranny of the Edomite.

The old king, knowing that his days were numbered, rendered desperate by the hatred entertained for him, and fearful of some unforeseen catastrophe, that might follow his decease, determined to destroy the child by all means. But "the heathen rage and peoples imagine a vain thing"; when "they take counsel together against the Lord and his anointed." "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh at them and the Lord shall have them in derision." At the

same time all traces of the infant of promise strangely disappeared. As the city of Bethlehem had been at the time crowded with notables; a poor and vagrant family like Joseph's had not attracted so much attention. And then their stay was but brief; they were gone in a night; but their record had been left indelible. If expectation followed them to Egypt, they did not tarry there long; and whither they went, no one could easily learn: the clue was lost. Joseph's determination to Nazareth seems to have been taken on the road.

It was safe that the child should be reared at a distance from Jerusalem, and among the coarse and rude citizens of a remote town. Had he been brought up in the immediate vicinity of the capital, his experience at twelve years of age shows that he might have attracted too great attention; and that he might have been prematurely identified. Nothing lovelier ever appeared on earth than a genuine case of infantile piety; and such perfection as shone in him like a heaven-lighted glory, could not be concealed, where there were eyes to behold. The thread of history was so broken; that many may have supposed, that the heir of David's throne must have perished in the massacre of the innocents. There must still have been those who reflected that God's plans and purposes can never be thwarted, and that the child of promise was somewhere safe.

The words of the prophet Isaiah respecting him are remarkable: "Unto us a child is born; unto us a son is given;" he uses the very phraseology of the angel, "unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour." He is not so much the property of his parents; he is humanity's child, the son of the race. His very birth removes him from the scale of private individuals, and makes him a public character, belonging to no one age or nation. He is "the second man from heaven;" his relationship is as wide as Adam's; and he stands in a similar relation to the whole human family. He is born to every human being; and born into the souls of those, who are prepared by faith to receive him, upon the inward throne of their affections.

"Let the sea roar and the fulness thereof; the earth and they that dwell therein; let the floods clap their hands; and

let the hills be joyful together before the Lord; for he cometh to judge the earth." The trumpet of prophecy had been sounding for four thousand years: "he cometh;" "he cometh;" and at length the great prediction is fulfilled. Let an infidel world criticise and scoff at the conception and birth of Jesus: an humble, devout mind will adore the matchless wisdom which has devised a way, by which an infinite and sinless personage has been engrafted upon our fallen race, in such a way as to partake of our nature, and become one of us: able to bear our imputed sin, and atone for our transgressions. Truly "the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men;" "for of him, and through him, and to him are all things; to whom be glory forever and ever." Amen.

CHAPTER IV.

JOHN THE BAPTIST.

It had been distinctly announced by the ancient prophets, that a remarkable forerunner should introduce the expected Messiah. Isaiah heard the voice crying in the wilderness: "prepare ye the way of the Lord:" and Malachi describes him as being his own next successor; and as being Elijah himself reproduced. The age of the advent, as much apostatized as that of Ahab, demanded a reformer possessing a zeal equal to that of the old prophet; and able single-handed to withstand a nation, and make a king tremble on his throne. John filled the description perfectly; and the goodness of God was wonderfully displayed in providing for the work to be accomplished, a man, who should take the heart of the Jewish nation by storm, as it were. He was their very beau ideal of a prophet; intensely Jewish, and well adapted to secure the confidence, and gain the hearts of the people at once. Only a trifling minority refused his baptism; on the ground, that Jews of pure and uncontaminated blood could not be subjected like Gentiles to an ordinance, which implied their need of spiritual purification equally with the sinners and the uncircumcised.

In the first place John was a Nazarite; and the Nazarites were the very cream of Judaism. Their vow was taken usually for a specified term of a month or a year or two. Occasionally in their history had arisen men, who were Nazarites from birth and for life, as Sampson, Samuel, Elijah and Daniel, among the mightiest of their heroes and prophets. John was one of this exalted class, a Nazarite from birth, and for life; and this elevated him in the estimation of the people, and endeared him in their affections, as a successor of the ancient worthies of Israel.

Then again asceticism was in high vogue in that age; the tendency of religious advance being in that direction;

and an unbounded veneration was felt for a character of this kind. God sent them in John a man after their own coveted model, a man who filled all their predilections, and commanded their confidence at once.

And then he was a prophet born; and needed no credentials of miracles to certify his appointment of God. No occurrence was ever more openly advertised than his birth. The highest angel in the skies announced it in the temple, at the time of one of their great annual feasts. "The whole multitude of the people were praying without" at the time. This expression undoubtedly designates a national attendance upon the service in progress. The birth of John was an event of the greatest national importance; and might well be proclaimed to the nation at its principal convocation, probably a passover or a pentecost. Angel communication was the method of revelation hallowed in the memory of the Jew, by the most signal occurrences in their national history; and agreeing with all the precedents of their past. The feast selected for the announcement was probably the Pentecost; for this supposition would fix the date of Mary's three months' visit to Elizabeth to the winter months, when traveling would be impracticable to a woman; and she would be compelled to remain with her kinswoman. And indeed we find by computation, that the course of Abia, to which Zacharias belonged, officiated in the middle of June B. C. 7: when their term may have covered the week of the Pentecost.

There certainly is a probability that the appearance of the miraculous star of Bethlehem may have been coincident with the conjunction of the three largest planets, which Kepler found to have taken place in the years B. C. 6 and B. C. 5. What suggested to him the star of Bethlehem, was, the presence with these three planets, of a fourth star, then seen for the first time, between Jupiter and Saturn, a star of extraordinary brilliancy, and of a different and peculiar color. It was the presence of this temporary, evanescent, companion star, that led him to suggest for the date of the birth of Jesus the year B. C. 6. This rare phenomenon of four bright stars in close conjunction continued through portions of two years, the very length of time

which the Magi named to Herod: being in fact not quite two years, though Herod in his anger made it two full years.

The star of Bethlehem was an advertisement to the world: the wise men from the east probably were of a class which made the sky their particular study; and hence being familiar with the expectations of the Jews, who were still a numerous population in the far east, interpreted the indications of the sky as designating the immediate appearance of the expected King, whose arrival was even then due.

Their coming to Jerusalem fixed in the minds of the people the connection between the wonderful circlet in the nocturnal sky, and "the child that was born, the Son that was given, whose name was the Wonderful." To him nature, angels, and the inspiration of the Holy Ghost gave witness. On the journey of those Magi from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, they had no expectation of seeing the star, which was now a thing of the past; their guide may have been a glorious angel, assuming the lustre and the color of the well known star, and directing them to the very house they sought.

The nation were thus abundantly notified of the immediate fulfillment of the ancient prophecies, and so of the speedy appearance of the forerunner, who should prepare the way of the Lord before him. His birth was a miracle, like that of the child of laughter, born when Abraham was a hundred years old, and Sarah proportionally advanced; and John might have been greeted with a like welcome of laughter. All the hill country of Judea was stirred by the event; and all knew that the Lord had visited his people, and had raised up for them a horn of salvation; and was fulfilling the promises made to the fathers, the oath that he had sworn to Abraham. No one taketh the honor of a prophet unto himself, but he that is called of God; none ever had a clearer designation, or more indubitable credentials.

John had a history unparalleled except in the one case. It was impossible to doubt the angelic annunciation, fortified as it was by the miracle of judgment imposed upon Zacharias for his unbelief, and the further miracle of re-

lease at the naming of the child. Heaven called the attention of the nation to him, and accredited him, as no other was ever accredited.

During his youth and early manhood, John seems to have been a solitary man to the time of his public appearance. Great themes occupied his attention; and a responsibility was on him, that he could not divide with another. Perhaps also the unusual influences of the Holy Spirit have a tendency to isolate a man. As the stricken deer forsakes the herd, to languish in the deepest recesses of the forest, the prophet, burdened with a message from the Most High, has exhaustless food for private meditation. Like Elijah, he was the prophet of the wilderness, which was his ordinary abode: the wilderness hallowed to the Jews by all the memories of their wonderful history. Like his prototype, he had stood upon the rocky slopes of the Mount of God; and sheltered in its caverns; devoting his time to communion with his thoughts, and the great Unseen. To such a soul, the wilderness presented attractions. As Elijah came out from the wilderness with the suddenness of an unexpected flash from a careering cloud, so John, with hair and beard untouched by the hand of man, in coarsest garments and with hardiest fare, presented himself to the men of that generation in a guise suited to command their instant attention, and secure their highest respect.

He was almost a reproduction of Elijah's self; and like him, was awful in his reproof of sin. The old prophet had been not only stern, but, as it were, fierce in his denunciations. The man who, in his zeal for Jehovah, could with his own hand, in obedience to the law of Moses, immolate the prophets of Baal, was not the man to mince or hesitate in the condemnation of wrong. His romantic courage, and his invincible faith, gave him an undisputed ascendancy; the king trembled before him, and the hearts of the people bowed to him.

John possessed a kindred zeal and courage, and in his preaching emulated the old reformer, whom he represented. His message agreed with the expectations of the people, being of the same tenor with that delivered by the mighty prophets of the past in every degenerate age, as the prepa-

tion for God's returning favor. By the immediate adherence of the people, he became at once the master spirit of the times. In the brief reports of his addresses left us, we learn that he "knew not to give flattering titles to men:" but, as one ordained of God, spoke with the most blunt directness of address, the most caustic severity, and the most scathing denunciation of sin. For a time he filled the view of the nation: attracted the attention of the Sanhedrim, who, by a special committee, investigated his mission: and drew the gaze of Herod, who invited him to preach before himself and court.

The plainness and severity with which he revealed and denounced the Pharisees and Sadducees, ring like the words of Christ himself. He inculcated a spiritual instead of a formal religion, a repentance that should be, as the word signifies, a change of heart; and demanded a reformation that should be a necessary result of this inward grace. He was thus restoring primitive Judaism.

His life seems to us, as we read its record, a sad one indeed. He was destined not to see the victory of the Messiah, nor to understand the outcome of his career; but to die amid the doubts and perplexities arising from his master's want of success, and fast approaching rejection by his own people. In his despondency even he resembles his illustrious prototype. We can hardly recognize Elijah in the prostrate form under the juniper tree. The man of iron, who could face a frowning world, when he did succumb, seemed to fail entirely, and become weak as any other man. Like him John, notwithstanding the fullest assurances of the Messiahship of Jesus, worn with confinement, tired out with delay, and impatient of the darkening prospect, sent messengers to inquire of the Master: "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" For a time he seemed "a reed shaken by the wind;" but only for a time. Herodias, the evil genius of Antipas, as Jezebel was of Ahab, was his irreconcilable enemy, lying in continual wait, and at length prevailed against him. He was left to die amid the darkness: not favored like Moses with a Pisgah view of the coming kingdom. He laid down his life amid the

deepest shadows of the valley; but clinging more closely than ever to him whom he had heralded.

A marvellous sympathy for him was in every heart; and not a doubt was felt of his mission as a true propnet. But the like had never occurred before. The messengers whom God had sent had, without exception, been long-lived; even if they had at last become victims of the rage of enemies. They had been invulnerable by the hostilities of opposers, until the purpose of their life had been accomplished. God had defended them by the shield of his own presence; and saved them by camps of angels in the midst of persecutors. Their service had been extended through years of testimony and labor; but John perished being yet young. Isaiah had prophesied for sixty years; Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Micah, Moses and Daniel, forty years each; John's ministry had continued but little more than a year. An unspeakable sympathy for his untimely end filled the hearts of the nation. That the only prophet, that had appeared for four centuries, should, after thirty years of preparation, be thus cut off after one year of service, proved some deep design of him who worketh all things wisely and well. A melancholy interest attached to his memory; and gave rise to the fancy, that he might yet rise from the dead to complete his career.

But nevertheless his work was done. To designate the great Redeemer was honor enough for any single life. He had time to bear ample testimony; and his loudest proclamation had been made by his death. He had been superior to Moses and all his successors in the wonders of his birth, and the near position he had held to the man of promise. They had testified of him standing afar off, and looking down the ages; he had laid his hands upon him in that service, by which he had consecrated himself to God as his righteous servant to accomplish the great work of the redemption of a race. His was the place of honor nearest to the king of glory; and it was meet that when the Lord appeared, the servant should immediately disappear. Such is the conduct becoming the position which he occupied.

Every eye was thus turned upon him, "who came after him but was before him, and before Abraham, before all

creatures; and with God when only God was. As the morning star disappears in the glory of the approaching luminary; so John dropped out of view. His death thus announced the fact, that the sun had arisen; the man of destiny is standing among you; the seed of the woman has come; God has provided his lamb of whom he spake to Abraham; the crisis of the world is at hand; the age of the prophets has passed, and the age of fulfilment has come. God, by snatching away John at this stage of his career, said, as it were, the principal figure is before the eyes of the nation; let nothing divert their gaze from him. "This is my beloved son, hear him."

Come we now to the great incident of the ministry, the baptism of Jesus. John was evidently well acquainted with the son of Mary. He knew doubtless all about his heavenly descent, his miraculous conception, and his sinless life. That his parents should have concealed from him any of the particulars of the history of one, with whom his own life was to be so closely interwoven, is quite improbable. Mary had no confidant but Elizabeth; as "she kept all these things" from the world, "and pondered them in her heart." These matters were not the theme of common gossip; but sacred secrets of which she could speak freely only with the wife of Zacharias, whose condition of pregnancy the angel had proposed to her, as the confirmation of the message delivered to herself.

No reason can be suggested, why the two children should not have often met; and indeed become familiar associates, understanding their relative positions and future connection. John probably knew all that his mother was able to communicate; and the words in which he declined administering baptism to the only one, in whose case the outward sign of purification seemed inappropriate, and the shock which he evidently felt at the mention of it, demonstrate the fulness of his information. John certainly understood him to be the Holy One of God. The sinlessness of his childhood and youth had distinguished him, as clearly as the immaculate purity of his riper years. His had been a childhood purer than the snow; a youth whiter than the light; a young manhood of celestial nobility.

The ordinance of purification seemed to have no application to him: nor did it, except as an act of consecration on his part. When John said, "I knew him not," his meaning must have been that he did not officially know him. When God sent him to baptize and to reveal the hidden Christ, he had not designated him by name or by description: but had given a sign by which he should be recognized, when he appeared. John did not even know that the sign would be connected with the administered ordinance.

There was a baptism for which himself daily prayed: an inward purification, the only earthly boon he craved; and Jesus, he knew, had the power to bestow it: the baptism of the Holy Ghost: "and comest thou to me?" The reply of Jesus to this demurrer was: "Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness," and it implies that our Lord felt himself bound to comply with every requirement exacted of man: and seems to contain an implication, that John's hesitation arose from his knowledge of the true standing of the exalted applicant before him. The man, whom the countenance of an angry king could not abash, was thoroughly overcome at the presence of the humble, road-stained traveler from Nazareth. He knew that, by the ordinance, he could no more add to Jesus, than he could add light to the sun, or gild the sky. It was doubtless with trembling hands that he poured the water of consecration upon the head destined to wear the diadem of the universe. It was the one occasion of his life, the crowning act of his career.

As the two, apart from the crowd of spectators, ascended the bank of Jordan together, Jesus prayed, perhaps on this wise: "Lo, I come to do thy will, O, God: in the volume of the book it is written of me. Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not: a body hast thou prepared me: burnt-offering and sin-offering thou hast not required: yea, thy law is in my heart." Make me to bear their griefs, and carry their sorrows: to be wounded for their transgressions: and bruised for their iniquities: let the chastisement of their peace be on me: and by my stripes let them be healed: let me be brought as a lamb to the slaughter: and lay

upon me the iniquity of them all;" let me become the scape-goat of human sin and lay down my life, the just for the unjust.

As he prayed, the heaven was opened, i. e., a beam of light brighter than the midday sun, came from beyond the region of sun and stars, and illuminated his person; and in the light the form of the bird of mourning circled down; until it alighted upon his head; and abode upon him. All saw the light; for Justin Martyr relates that the banks of Jordan were illuminated far and near; but none but the two saw the glittering form of the dove.

Simultaneously came a voice from heaven: "this is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased;" and after the form of the dove had alighted, the voice repeated: "thou art my beloved son; in thee I am well pleased." And so was fulfilled the scripture in Is. XI: 2, which says, when the little shoot shall sprout from the decayed root of the stump, not of David, for there was nothing royal about him, but of Jesse, the plain, private citizen; "on him shall rest the spirit of the Lord, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord;" the seven-fold energies of the divine spirit: or as Paul puts it, "the spirit without measure."

Such influences no mere man can receive and live; more than man can see God and live. There have been instances in which the excess of the divine influence has almost broken the earthen vessel; and God has been besought to stay his hand; but on Jordan's bank stood one, who could sustain the unstinted measure of holy influence, and bear the face view of the dread Jehovah. This separates him from the mass of mankind, as the one capable of assuming the position of mediator; being able to appear by virtue of his own personality before the burning throne.

Doubtless he might now have said, as on another similar occasion he did say: "this voice came not because of me; but for your sakes." *He* needed no confirmation from heaven, to enable him to understand his own high identity; or to encourage him with a conviction of his high descent. That he should be God, as well as man, and not be con-

scious of his own exalted nature, is too puerile an interpretation to be regarded: to say that he who had waited 4000 years, till the clock of destiny had struck the hour of his appearance on earth, should be when he came, unconscious of his own personality, is to deny that he was God.

We find him at twelve years of age filled with the sublime consciousness of it. Mary had never communicated to him the secret of his origin; mothers do not speak of such things to their sons; she calls to him at this very time Joseph as his father: "thy father and I have sought thee, sorrowing." His reply was to the effect, I know very well the father, from whom I am descended. "How is it that ye sought me," as ye would have sought another boy, through the streets, or in the places of common resort?" "Wist ye not that I should be about my father's business," or in my father's house? as the words might well be translated. She was amazed, as she well might be, at his self-consciousness. He needed not that any should tell him.

The object of this bestowal of the Holy Ghost was to energize and qualify his humanity for the great work before him. All the abilities and graces which the human nature is capable of receiving, were bestowed when the spirit rested on him "Grace was poured into his lips;" "he was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows:" "he hath made my mouth as a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me: and said unto me, thou art my servant in whom I will be glorified."

The inauguration of a king or president is a great occasion and grand ceremony. This induction possessed no pomp or worldly show: it was enacted in no cathedral of solemn architecture, nor with holy oil; but under the great dome of the sky, the anointing being by the holy dove from heaven, bearing influences which none but he can impart.

It is impossible to conceive a more public announcement of the actual advent of the Messiah than was thus made. The coming of the forerunner was advertised to the nation, at one of the great feasts probably; the birth of the promised seed, and his actual presence in Bethlehem, was pro-

claimed in the court of Herod by the magi from the East; and in due time the appearance of the last and greatest of the prophets aroused the whole nation of the Jews into an eager and wondering expectancy; and his sudden and almost immediate disappearance was the loudest possible proclamation that the coming one was already in their midst. John had only time to say, "Behold the lamb of God," and pointing to Jesus to say, "this is he of whom I spake:" and he was gone.

He left all eyes strained to catch a view of the prince of Israel; and all hearts beating with a strange expectancy, and ready to receive him. Jesus thus dropped into their very midst, as God's "beloved son, in whom he was well pleased." The way could not have been better prepared for his immediate, and unhesitating reception; and heaven could not have more loudly proclaimed his actual presence. The wonderful scene at his baptism was sufficient to remove all doubt. The whole process of the gradual unfolding of the great mystery took place in the keenest sunlight of publicity; and the death of the great prophet was itself the loudest of all the testimony which his ministry afforded.

CHAPTER V.

THE CALL OF PETER AND HIS ASSOCIATES.

The most impressive method of instruction is by object lessons: it was our Lord's favorite method, and gave an indescribable power to his words. The account of the call of Peter comprises one of the most striking in the history. Before it is considered, it is necessary to have some idea of the man. Our Lord's choice of him, for the conspicuous position which he occupied, proves him to have been a remarkable man in some respects. It is easily perceived from his gospel; that he was more affected by the miracles than any other of the twelve; and that he comprehended them better. He was a rude, uncultivated fisherman, noted more for the impulsiveness of his disposition than for any other quality. A stronger specimen of this cast of character can hardly be found. Men of this hasty temper are invariably subject to certain sins. They are constitutionally prone to falsehood, speaking without an instant's deliberation. It is true of them, that things say themselves; and they know what is uttered, only as they hear it. Falsehood was the habit of Peter's life; but not deliberate lies, so much as continual slips of the tongue. Yet he had not the power to deceive; for he was perfectly translucent. To act a part, to carry out an assumed character, was to him an impossibility. This is true of men of his class. Coming into life with so odious a vice deeply imbedded in the structure of our moral being, and defying all attempts at correction, is one of the sad liabilities of our condition as fallen beings.

Another vice, to which such are prone, is profanity. Sins of the tongue are their besetment. The unruly member can no man tame. Every feeling of impatience, of irritability or disappointment, speaks itself out in blasphemy. Peter showed himself familiar with the whole vocabulary of the

pit, when he denied his lord and master. This was but a relapse into his confirmed habits of strong language. This habit of profanity is the only recognition of a superintending providence, and admission of the being of a God, which some men express. For its formation little teaching or example is needed; it is the natural language of the hasty, impulsive, impetuous type of human beings.

Another weakness of the man was, chameleon-like, to take the complexion of the company in which he found himself. He was entirely carried away with the present occasion; and entered with the greatest zest into what was passing; and was largely moulded by the interests of the hour. The present was, with him, the whole of life. No man had a keener appreciation of what was taking place, or quicker observation; indeed he seemed for the time to forget the past, and to surrender himself wholly to the events, amid which he was. Ardent in his attachments, impetuous in his feelings, overflowing with irrepressible zeal, and possessed with a high sense of his own sufficiency, he was always the first in every emergency; and obeying the dictates of his hasty temper, put himself easily and naturally in the lead among his fellows.

He was by no means a coward. In the great exigency into which his master came, Peter having found himself in possession of one of the swords belonging to the company, with full intent to use it against whoever might oppose, be he Jew or Roman, was ready to strike the first blow of a bloody conflict against odds. His estimation of himself was such as to sustain him in any measure he might adopt. Knowing the injustice of the rulers, the meanness and treachery of their method, and keenly sensitive to the outrage being perpetrated by them, he took no thought that he was resisting the established authorities; but abandoned himself to a contest, which proved him sincere; when he professed himself willing to go to prison or to death with his master. He struck with intent to kill at the first man who laid his hands on Jesus. He was loyal in his adherence; neither did he flee until the use of the sword was interdicted; and no alternative was left him but to flee, or surrender himself to arrest. He followed, how-

ever, into the very den of lions, thus exposing himself to the cruel temptation, which swept him away. There were grand points in the man's make-up, allied, however, with the most glaring weaknesses.

If there was ever a mortal, who stood in need of the indwelling superintendence and guidance of a heavenly monitor, Peter was the man. With the inward director, he was in himself a host; without it, he was unsteady, unreliable and wavering. He may have been chosen as the leader on this very account; that his weakness might compel him to rely upon the continual aids of divine grace. Jesus was to be the leader: and the visible conductor was to take orders every instant from the presiding spirit; who was able to make the bruised reed stable as a rock, for which he was named, amid the beating billows of the sea. About one thing he never wavered, the divinity of his master, whose inward direction imparted to the apostle's character a dignity, completeness and force never surpassed. He would have been a prominent man in any age or community.

When at length the great crisis arrived, which brought him to the front, the most conspicuous of the twelve; the last touch of preparation, the culminating finish of his education, was the permitting him to fall into the sore temptation, which carried him away as with a flood. In the hour when his master needed a friend, and "looked around for comforters but found none," this disciple, full of the loudest professions, was left, with harsh and angry voice, in the very hearing of his Lord, to repudiate him with the vilest blasphemy. This denial, coming at the time when it would be felt most deeply, was a part of the sufferings of the holy one.

But to return to the fisherman, at the time of his call, he had been for some time a nominal adherent of the Nazarene; and had received the surname of Cephas or Peter, transferring his connection from the Baptist to the one whom he heralded. While our Lord remained in Capernaum, he abode at Peter's house; visiting it after the synagogue service on the first memorable Sabbath.

During the service a surprising incident had occurred. A man possessed by a demon had been present, who was indeed a

regular attendant; and had been allowed to come, because he generally conducted himself with proper decorum, as insane persons commonly do during religious exercises; but who on this occasion became spasmodically excited at the presence of Jesus; and interrupted the worship by exclaiming in a loud and angry tone, assuming to speak for the whole assembly: "Let us alone. What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? *I* know thee who thou art, the holy one of God." This discernment was not the instinct of insanity, which often shows an unexampled intuition; but was the utterance of the demon, who alone of all present knew the precise status of the teacher. When Jesus authoritatively commanded him out of his victim, he indeed complied with manifestations of rage; but "came out of him, and hurt him not." The remaining portion of the service was conducted amid an awe-struck stillness and attention; but an astounding proclamation had been made of the high character of the strange teacher.

Coming to Peter's house, greater wonders still ensued. His wife's mother, the victim of a dangerous fever, was instantly restored to health and strength; so as to return at once, without an interval of convalescence, to the labors of her housekeeping. And this was only one of many equally astonishing cures wrought when the sun had set. No one was more impressed by these mighty works than Peter himself, whose penetrating observation and acute judgement served him well.

On the next day, as Jesus was walking by the sea of Galilee, a great multitude thronged him; for the people were thoroughly aroused, desirous to hear again from the teacher of yesterday. By the shore, in a spot where the water was of suitable depth, lay two ships belonging, one to Simon and Andrew and the other to Zebedee and his sons James and John. Jesus being thus called upon for discourse, entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him to launch out a little from the shore. When the vessel had been put in about the centre of the cove; our Lord had an improvised pulpit as convenient as

could be arranged, and an audience well accommodated for hearing; and he sat down and taught them from the ship.

Of the subject and tenor of his discourse, nothing is known; except that his personality was as distinctly audible in his words, as his power was visible in his works. At the close he requested Peter to launch out into deep water, and let down his net for a draught, a request with which Peter hesitatingly complied, observing that they had "toiled all night and taken nothing." There was in his words the tone of an expert, who knows what he is talking about, and is well apprised that there is no possibility of success. The day time and bright sunshine are not the season for fishing; night is the time. The deep waters are not the place for catching with a net; but the shallower sea. But in face of his fisherman instinct he was willing to let down the net "at thy word." The result was that the net was neither large enough nor strong enough to hold the finny prey that was captured. It was impossible to haul it to the shore as it was already breaking from the abundance of the catch.

The solemnity of the company can be understood from the quiet call to their partners; they beckoned without speaking. When the other ship came to Peter's assistance, the greatest wonder of all was; that as fast as the fish were taken out by scoop nets, other fish continued entering the net, replacing again and again those which had been removed; until both the ships were sunken to the gunwales; and a little additional weight would have carried them to the bottom. Ships of size were used upon the lake, as we learn from Josephus. A big haul of a hundred and fifty and three would not sink a canoe; unless they had been monsters. Enough were caught to furnish each one of the assembled crowd or each family represented with its food for the day. Like the widow's pot of oil which ceased not running until the vessels prepared to receive it were exhausted; the fish came through the broken opening in the net; until there was no room to store them farther.

This, occurring in Peter's own trade, with every feature of which he had been familiar from boyhood, carried him entirely away. He left the business of the fish entirely to

other hands, transported by an impulse which it was not in him to resist, and turned his attention to the strange preacher calmly sitting on his deck, who seemed in some inexplicable way associated with the power that ruled the sea, and to be indeed "the holy one of God." Judgment had been for some days pursuing him; it overtook him just then; he himself was caught. He was suddenly full of a sense of his unworthiness; "he was weighed in the balance and found wanting;" and would fain have fled to hide himself like Adam. Unfit to occupy the same abode with Jesus, he fell at his knees, with the words pouring from his broken heart; "depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

There is nothing that can produce such certainty of divine rule and divine judgment as an awakened conscience; the convictions of reason are shadows in comparison. He could not bear the inspection of this stranger, whose eye seemed to pierce into his naked and open breast. It was not the miracle that so moved him: it was the power behind it: and the stainless purity. His prayer was almost a repetition of that of the poor demonized man of the Sabbath just past: "Let us alone. What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? I know thee, who thou art: the holy one of God." Our Lord hastened to quiet his fear: we are most acceptable in his sight when least in our own: "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men;" "but rise and stand upon thy feet; for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose to make thee a minister, and a witness both of those things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes; to turn them from darkness to light; and from the power of Satan unto God; that they may receive the forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among those which are sanctified through faith that is in me."

This was a promise of unprecedented success. He should reap that whereon he had bestowed no labor. Other men had labored; John the Baptist had sowed the seed through the gloom; and had not seen one ray of the coming glory. Even Jesus himself had seen little fruit of his labors. On the Pentecost the harvest time of the Jewish nation began

Peter was eminently fitted for a gatherer, being a man of instantaneous decision himself, hasty and intense in his emotions and activities, jumping with all the fervor of his nature to the course to be pursued. His whole emotion centered in the present. He was the man to charge home to the conscience of the Jews the unspeakable guilt of rejecting their Messiah, and to call upon them immediately to repent and convert. Christ chose Peter, crushed like the broken reed, fit only to be cast aside and rejected. While his heart was still sore over his own apostasy, he was filled with pity for those who persisted in denying the Lord that bought them, and could address them in their guilt as "brethren." Ye denied him before Pilate: "I wot that through ignorance ye did it:" My own denial was in the face of knowledge and profession. The tide of his feeling rose to the flood as he exhorted them to save themselves from this untoward generation. His preaching must have had in it a wonderful force, if we may judge of it by the epistles which he has left. An immense terseness and vigor sound in them; and we almost hear the word now, now in every exhortation. Gifted with pithy, nervous address, and capable of herculean efforts on the spur of the moment, he was admirably qualified for the work which he was called to perform.

God can indeed make use of any man's individuality, and endue it with such power as to render him the very man for the age; but God himself must polish the shaft.

2. A long night of seemingly fruitless toil precedes the ingathering. A season of sowing always precedes the reaping season. The work of the sower is longer extended and more arduous than that of the reaper. It is his to watch the favorable moment, and to cast in the seed, when he finds the soil broken up to receive it. In the womb of the earth it may lie buried out of sight long, waiting for the coming of the showers, and the vivifying heat of the sun. The sower does his work with weeping, and soaks his seed with tears. The process of germination is beyond his observation. The christian mother is the seed-sower first in order of time; and her efforts may for a long period seem unavailing; yet are they not abandoned. The christian

teacher and friend are engaged in the same work: and every scripture truth used is a seed deposited in a ready soil. The preacher of the gospel is above all others the divinely appointed laborer, scattering broadcast the seeds of truth.

Often one sows and another reaps. The whole life of Elijah the mighty prophet appears to have been preparatory and introductory: the fruit was gathered by his successor. Such were the labors of the Baptist: he was the sower of the seed, while others gathered the harvest. Daniel also in Babylon prepared the way for subsequent results. Every great advance of the church follows a period of protracted, faithful and laborious effort.

3. Success comes at the word of Christ. God can bring men to decision by the arrangements of his providence: as the arrest and condemnation of the Nazarene forced Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus to a public avowal of their long-concealed convictions, and to a sincere acknowledgement of their allegiance to the rejected one. He knows how to place a man at the point, where the two ways part, and leave him to make his selection. As the ambassador of Rome drew a circle with his cane around Mithridates; and required a definite answer of compliance with the demands of the senate, or of refusal, before he crossed the line of the circle: so God hedges a man's way, and brings him to a stand; that he may choose or refuse submission to the requirements of the gospel. He can bring a whole nation to the point at once, "multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision;" as the whole Jewish nation was brought by the resurrection of Jesus: and forced to take sides either for the truth or for the falsehood.

Whenever men either single or in crowds find themselves compelled to an immediate decision of compliance with the demands, of the gospel, or of refusal: such a season may be the crisis of their eternal destiny. Their whole opportunity may be narrowed down; till much may depend upon the conduct of an hour. The kingdom of heaven has come nigh unto such.

As the husbandman sows his wheat in the autumn, and sees it buried in the soil during all the frosts of winter,

where it cannot vegetate; so the spiritual sower may deposit his seed with no prospect of an immediate harvest; but God can soften the soil by the genial influence of the returning sun, and send the vivifying showers; and the seed which had seemed dead may start to a new life; and a mighty field break into greenness at once. In the spiritual domain we call such an event a revival. The Savior is "wise in counsel and excellent in working;" and it is he, who orders and superintends the progress of his church. He not only prepared the field, but the reaper. Peter was qualified for his work not only by his broken hearted humility; but by the sincerity and transparency of his character, like a clear glass transmitting the rays of the light that shone within him.

Encouraged by the promise of Jesus, and filled with a real but yet untried faith, Simon and Andrew, and shortly after James and John, forsook all and followed him. He who commanded all the treasures of the deep, and who could supply the choicest wine from the common beverage from the fountain, could be trusted for all needed temporal supplies. Peter buoyantly left his family, and was willing to follow his master to prison or to death, confronting a world in arms. Their faith was genuine; their convictions immovable; and they were eager to link their fortunes with the nation's deliverer. Views of worldly advancement and riches never to be attained formed a deceptive mirage before them.

Had they known the truth, as they afterwards learned it, their zeal might not have been so ardent; yet their attachment was sincere; and they committed themselves to the direction of the new leader without hesitation; expecting the speedy fulfillment of his word, by the universal consent of the nation to his indisputable claims. Alas, how long and dark a night of toil was to intervene! and how far from universal was the nation's approval and adoption of him to be!

CHAPTER VI.

THE FIRST MIRACLE. JOHN II: 1-11.

The first display of divine power by the new teacher took place in an insignificant village of Galilee, whose very name might have been forgotten ages ago, but for the celebrity given it by this occurrence. The family, for whose help the miracle was wrought, was not only poor, but of the poorest. The season of the year was probably the time of the vintage, when wine making was in progress on every hand, and a supply could be obtained in any stage of preparation, from the fresh must to the perfectly fermented beverage. The memorable baptism probably took place in the early autumn; and this marriage followed shortly after. Indifferent wine was cheap and abundant: that the family was in a condition of poverty is plain, from the fact that a sufficient quantity for the protracted feast was not obtained, and that not of the best. The poor were ever the subjects selected for the benefits which the Lord bestowed.

The miracle was unexpected: no previous intimation being given. The virgin mother alone seems to have been looking for some display, which might justify the great predictions of angel and prophet. And then no one, not even the servants, who drew the water, saw any steps of a visible process. All was effected silently, and beyond the ken of observation. Had any, previously informed of what was coming, stationed themselves at the water jars to watch the proceeding, it is quite certain that nothing could have been observed, except the deepening color of the water, at the moment when the lips of the governor of the feast tested the cup: and at that moment the miracle was already past. It had been accomplished in the twinkling of an eye: there was no manipulation. Nor was immediate proximity to the water jars on his part necessary at all.

His was a power as effective at a distance as close at hand. Such silent, instantaneous, unobservable operation belongs to God alone.

The first thing suggested by this history, is, that Jesus is the only son, and indeed the only child, of Joseph and Mary. In several passages of the gospels, he is said to have had brethren and sisters; but according to Hebrew usage of speaking, a man's near relatives were all of them brothers and sisters. In 2 Kings x: 13-14, the brethren of Ahaziah, king of Judah, are mentioned forty and two men.

By referring back to 2 Chron. XXII: 1, it is learned that Ahaziah had no brothers, he alone having survived the massacre of the royal family by the Arabians. The brethren spoken of were none of them nearer of kin than uncles or cousins. A man's whole kindred were his brothers and sisters: and this probably explains the mention of the brethren and sisters of Jesus. Some of the christian fathers suggested that those named in Matt. XIII: 55, James and Joses and Simon and Judy were children of Joseph by a former marriage. This, as Dr. Edersheim has shown, cannot be the case. Our Lord was not *a* son of David, of whom probably there were scores or hundreds, but *the* son of David in the direct line. He could not be lawful heir of David by primogeniture through his father Joseph: except as being his first born son, which he was beyond all question. He stood thus in the line of direct descent: and Mary was the only wife of Joseph.

We find in the Acts and Epistles the apostle James called the Lord's brother. The two Jameses in the apostolate were sons, one of them of Zebedee, and the other of Alpheus; and neither of them brothers literally of Jesus. Alpheus is supposed by many to be identical with Cleopas; whose wife Mary is mentioned as sister of the virgin. She could not of course have been full sister, and bear the same name, Mary. She was her relative, perhaps cousin; and the apostle James could not have been nearer of kin to Jesus than second cousin; and so according to Hebrew speech his brother.

This brief review appears to settle it, that our Lord had no real brothers. It seems probable also that he had no sisters: for if Mary had had another son or son-in-law; the

dying Christ would not have committed his mother to the charge of the apostle John. Some have supposed that as the brothers of the Savior were not believers, this may account for his passing them by. The history however positively states that they had become believers before the notable pentecost, and likely before the crucifixion; so that this explanation is not tenable. The conclusion then seems inevitable that he was the only child of his parents. This condition isolates him perfectly: David's direct line coming to an abrupt termination in him: after Jesus there could be no direct lineal descendant by primogeniture from David. This isolation would be more perfect, if Joseph were the only son of Jacob: and Mary Eli's only daughter. This direct descent from David continued till the advent of the promised seed; and he stands designated by the finger of providence, as well as that of prophecy, as the expected one, upon whose shoulder the government should revert; and upon whom the hopes of the world should center.

The destruction of their genealogical tables begun by Herod, was made entire by the Roman war; but before it was completed, men of that day, who had every opportunity of genealogical examination, were not only convinced of his regal claim; but proclaimed it in the face of the nation: and the bitterest enemies of the cross never denied it: though this had been the easiest and surest method of destroying the rising sect. The pedigrees of descent being preserved with a more than religious care, nothing could have been more convincing than the records of the house of David produced to the harm of christianity. Had it been possible, it would have been done without fail. It is enough for us to know that it never was attempted even.

His parents were not indeed residents of David's city; and the birth took place while they were on the move from Nazareth to Egypt: and after a stay of forty days, Joseph slipped away a fugitive by night. That the birth occurred there was not only a matter of record in the Jewish tables; but it was likewise recorded in letters of blood upon living tablets and broken hearts.

2 This history shows that Mary was not allowed to have a mother's influence over her son: and indeed almost

no influence at all. We have no reason to believe that his ordinary address to her was, "Woman." There was reproof in the word unusual upon his lips. He undoubtedly addressed her in the most respectful manner usually; but now there is an altered tone as well as altered words. She was to understand at once the difference in their position. From being the most obedient child, complying with her every wish, listening to every suggestion: he was entering upon his public career as the Messiah, in which he was to suffer no dictation, and tolerate no advice. She was to be no longer mother, but woman. His father's business hereafter claimed him exclusively, in which he had no counselor. "None can say to him what doest thou?" "He will do his pleasure." The style of the address may seem to us a little harsh; but it was no rougher than was needed at the very outset of his course; that she might not presume upon her connection with him, though the highly favored among women," to whom even the angel of the annunciation appeared to show a deference.

This annihilates entirely the Catholic figment, that Mary even now exercises a commanding influence over her son. A little farther along the gospel story, we come to a time when the country was full of the slander, that he cast out devils by Beelzebub; and that himself was possessed of a devil. It was at this time that Mark tells us Ch. III; 21; "When his friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him; for they said, he is beside himself." They would have used force with him; and the loving and anxious mother doubtless was in full consent. Not being able to approach him for the press, "they sent unto him, calling him. And the multitude sat about him; and they said, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee. And he answered them saying: who is my mother or my brethren?" He would hardly have spoken thus, if his mother had not been carried away by the considerations of worldly policy which guided his unbelieving brethren. Her maternal solicitude led her to listen to counsels utterly unworthy of her divine son; and his refusal to see her was a just and merited reproof of her unbelief. How infinitely

below the standard, her feelings and purposes really were; she undoubtedly realized afterwards.

In all that we know about Mary, we see nothing great or extraordinary in her. Her faith was truly remarkable at the time when she received the angelic visitation. Notwithstanding the difficulties into which the fulfilment of his words would bring her, she believed and said: "Be it unto me according to thy word." But in her magnificat we hear nothing especially sublime; we simply hear the unmeasured astonishment with which she found herself selected as the "highly favored" mother; herself so reduced, so poor, so overlooked by the rich and mighty.

This appears to be almost the sole thought of the song; resembling, indeed Hannah's, but not shining with as brilliant flashes of true poetry, nor exhibiting a soul so finely sensitive. Had she been carried away by the strongest emotions of the wildest poetry, none could have wondered; but the whole effusion bespeaks a plain, plodding woman, to whom her son speaks by reproof almost harsh.

That the idea of her having been born without sin should ever have been entertained in the professedly Christian church, is simply horrible. But houses of worship stand in cultivated places dedicated to the immaculate conception. We hear the name as though it referred to the one conception; but if we remembered what the designation intends, the words would not be suffered to pass protestant lips. If idolatry ever intruded into the temple of God, and set up its images in the most holy place; this was done when the apostate church, not content with canonizing sinful mortals, and making them authorized intercessors with God, exalts a sinful worm of the dust to the height, on which the holy Son of God stands alone and unapproachable. The strongest proof of inborn sinfulness is liability to suffering. Let all men judge if the virgin, whom blasphemy celebrates as thrice holy, was exempt.

This mother certainly had no influence in the formation of his character, for she utterly failed to comprehend him. Great men are understood to derive their most conspicuous traits usually from the mother's individuality first; and then from mothers' training, who almost carry the destinies

of their offspring in their formative nursing. This one was run in no human mold, ennobled by no human teaching or example: he was what he was from inward forces, that never had place in another.

Neither had the spirit of the age, which shapes the man in every case, to which none can possibly rise superior, any influence in determining his character. The spirit of the age was not embodied in him; he was at the very antipodes of his age. Neither had Jewish training any share in the production of one, who never absorbed one drop of the gall and bitterness of Judaism. No forces in existence operated in his production. He was a growth wholly foreign to our world. Not one stain of the evil, with which the world everywhere abounds, attached to him. "The smell of the fire had not passed upon him." Like the pure ray of light, which cannot be contaminated by contact with filth, he was pure as heaven's light ever in this pandemonium of iniquity.

3. It is proper here to indicate the personal peculiarities of the great teacher, as far as we can gather them from the accounts remaining of him. It is probable that he was, in bodily appearance, beautiful: the beau ideal of humanity; that everything pertaining to his physical organization and outward appearance was faultless. The same body he will carry through eternity; therefore there was about it no defect, no disproportion, nothing offensive to the eye of the most fastidious taste. The features of his countenance were exquisite, doubtless: but there is a far higher grade of beauty than the merely physical. Of this spiritual beauty he was the very highest model. A purity and moral elevation stamped his whole person as being "fairer than the children of men." If low and base passions leave their hideous impress upon the face of mortals; and make the human countenance repulsive; as being a mere mask that conceals much, but reveals more; if character writes itself upon the outward tablet; we may justly conclude that all about him corresponded with his inward perfection. Through his eyes looked a soul that had never known sin, a spirit in which was no guile, and which was in uninterrupted communion with the highest glory, and full of the

elevation of the loftiest themes. The countenance of clay was but a thin veil, concealing yet revealing the heavenly indweller. His humanity was the enveloping globe that softened the glare of the too bright enclosed light.

That a personality endowed with such immeasurable force should have been destitute of facial expression, is incredible. The irrepressible movements of the human side of his person recorded themselves on features mobile and plastic. Communion with the holy ones made the countenance of Moses shine for a season; but the whole person of Jesus had been luminous ever, as on the Mount of Transfiguration, had he permitted it. If the light and the glory were not manifested, yet the beauty was there, the beauty of the soul, the beauty of holiness.

On this occasion, the great miracle so quietly wrought, the first for nearly five centuries, fastened the attention of all present upon him; and made him the sole object of regard. This he ever was in every company, however immense the crowd. All eyes turned ever upon him; and he was master of the situation always. Not a word that he spoke was ever lost; and each had the power of fixing itself in the memory beyond any example known. His replies were repeated from mouth to mouth, until they were in the possession of assembled millions at the times of the great feasts; and no one had eyes or ears for any other object than to observe or listen to him. Such conspicuousness well became him; for an inimitable grace was in every look and movement; a self-possession more perfect than ever seen through the ages, that could not be embarrassed by any possibility, made him serene and unmoved in the most exciting situations. His look indicated an imperturbable repose of soul. The deep calm of his spirit how unlike the unrest of ours, tossing ever like the sea casting up its mire and dirt! In no one respect did his look differ more from the common appearance of mortals, than in this strange and ineffable calmness and self-possession. He was solid rock: everyone else was shifting sand.

He was never taken off his guard, or surprised by any sudden attack. Nothing earthly had the power to excite him: the offer of a kingdom could not produce a ripple

in the still waters. So he was never at a loss, never confused, never in need of a moment's reflection. His answers were immediate always, and never missed the mark. They were always pregnant with personal application, that could not be evaded; but forced conviction on every gainsayer. The quickness and the wisdom of his replies, amaze us at this distance of time, as they did the questioners. Before him, men, whose hearts were boiling over with rage, "held their peace" and answered not again. Such a mental and spiritual superiority marked him, as friends and enemies in spite of themselves, alike were forced to acknowledge.

It is beyond our power to estimate the intensity of his character, the force of his individuality, his power of impression. His eye could subdue a man, or control a crowd. It drove Roman soldiers backward to the ground, broke the heart of the recreant Peter in the moment of its greatest hardness, and made the highest Jewish rulers afraid to encounter him. And no one ever trifled with him, or in his presence. Mighty crowds before him observed the most perfect decorum, and were swayed by him at a word. No congregation of worshipers in the temple were more orderly or quiet than those assemblies that followed him to the mountain, to the seashore, or the grassy retreat. At his word a host of five thousand seated themselves in ranks with the stiltness and precision of military obedience. His voice was easily heard through a press of many thousands by every individual in it; and all the highest qualifications of a leader were in him. A greater than Jonas, a wiser than Solomon, a mightier than the mightiest of the prophets, he moved with the eye of the nation upon him, the observed of all observers. Such greatness was compressed into the limits of our feeble humanity; that the very wonderfulness of the fact almost surpasses belief.

His presence at a marriage festival is demonstration, that his countenance was not always sad. The letter of a pretended Lentulus giving a description of him, as wearing a gloom of continual sadness, as often weeping but never laughing, is a forgery of the middle ages. Religious joy is the most intense of all species of happiness, "a well of water springing up unto everlasting life," whose origin is

too deep for human search. It is as far removed from frivolity as from gloom. Himself was "the fountain of living waters," he "had meat to eat that" the world "knew not of." His nature, unlike sinful human nature in which grief is rooted, had the buoyancy and elasticity of perfect freedom from evil. The most common expression of ordinary countenances, is one of utter indifference to others, or of disregard approaching to scorn: every one about the Nazarene on the contrary, realized that his affection embraced them in its warm folds. That his look was marked with more than a mother's sympathy for each individual; and that a divine compassion, was so conspicuous as to compel the notice of all observers is matter of record. He was in perfect contrast with the austerity and asceticism of the Baptist: at the wedding feast he shared the innocent pleasures of the occasion; nor could there be indecorum or excess in his presence; even were the wine which he made intoxicating, which it is not necessary to admit, for he was the acknowledged master, in whatever gathering he might be. The infinite happiness of the divine being arises largely from giving, from the communication of happiness to others. The dispensation of blessings on every hand must often have irradiated the face of the Savior with triumphant satisfaction: and his visible exultation over returning penitents could not be concealed. Lv. XV: 2. Occasions are also mentioned on which his joy overflowed. His presence did not cast a gloom over the company in this humble home.

With all these marks and accompaniments of true greatness, he was the most condescending of persons. He could accommodate himself to the smallest child; indeed he was a most remarkable lover of children. The simple, unsophisticated nature of childhood everywhere recognized him. His kindness and transparent naturalness won the heart of childhood, which opened to him as the flowers do to the sun. In every place childhood gathered to him "as the bosom of the ocean in its tide swells to the moon." In the little infant even, the shapeless hump of humanity, he felt an undissembled interest; though the disciples forbade the mothers' approach; and nowhere in the gospels does he

touch our hearts more deeply, than in the scene where he folds them in his arms, and blesses them.

Such was the personage, who now came into public view, manifesting for the first time the mysterious power which he possessed, to a company of peasants of Gallilee. His presence graced the marriage feast; and he gave it the high honor of his first miracle. He, who was to bear our griefs and carry our sorrows, showed that he sympathized with the joys as well as with the anguish of human life. Wherever he was, he was the light of the company, the charm of the listeners; and no occasion more richly merited his presence than the joyful celebration of the marriage of the young. The first benediction recorded in the old testament was upon a wedded pair whom God blessed; and Jesus hallowed with his first miracle this same institution of marriage.

CHAPTER VII.

A SKETCH OF THE MINISTRY.

Jesus of Nazareth was altogether the most striking character of the age. The eyes of all centered upon him. The theatre of his operations was indeed limited; but Caesar upon the throne of the world commanded far less attention from those within the compass of his personal range. More was condensed into the three or four years of the ministry, than ordinary ages could hold. These years were the focal point not only of the world's history; but of the great drama of eternity. It was notorious that, while the leaders despised the prophet of Nazareth, they trembled at him in their hearts. The origin and growth of their opposition is worthy of close attention.

I. For a time he was looked upon as a prophet only; his divinity had indeed been proclaimed at his baptism; but "Son of God" was a designation capable of more interpretations than one. The tone of his teachings and the manner of his miracles soon suggested its true definition; but on any point of strange and portentous importance, the human mind asks time for reflection; and must look at a question on all sides, in order to mature an opinion. It was not until his disciples had enjoyed many opportunities, and seen much evidence, that he asked them directly: "Whom do men say that I am, and whom say ye that I, the son of man, am?"

Outside of their own number none appreciated their master as the Christ; but accounted for the many mighty works by the theory, that he was one of the old prophets risen from the dead. The disciples had, however, seen enough to convince them, that he was "the Christ, the son of the living God." The supreme divinity of the expected Messiah was a matter of so stupendous import; that, how-

ever clearly revealed in the Jewish scriptures, it had ceased to be an article of Jewish faith, as exceeding the bounds of credibility: and was not inculcated by the doctors of the law. The prejudices of education had, however, been removed in the minds of the twelve by intimate association with their master. They had seen that he was peculiar: a man, indeed; but separate from men by a chasm of difference.

He was peculiar in his miracles. Prophets had been commissioned to perform a miracle in a life-time, or at great intervals of time. "Many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus; but none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman, the Syrian." Their master healed all that had need of healing, numbering scores in a day often, perhaps hundreds. And full as he was of zeal for the glory of God; yet not a word was lisp'd by him implying that the power which he exercised was not his own. His language was often "I will." In addition to his other wonderful works, he forgave sins; therein assuming an authority above that of the immutable law of God. That his forgiveness removed the sense of guilt, was evident to all, who observed the tears dry at his word, and the countenance shine with the glow of a benediction from above. In this there was enough to change all their preconceived notions; and lead them to look upon him as the son of God in the full sense of the word.

Their master was peculiar in his teaching. He was delivering no message from a higher authority: himself was the fountain of wisdom. His whole manner declared: "we speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen."

He was peculiar in his prayers. He was a man of prayer: but oh, what prayers he offered! He made no confession of sin, expressed no self-condemnation, implored no forgiveness: and his prayers were answered to the full extent of his petitions, and on the instant. Should a man pray in this manner, he might expect in return judgments instead of blessings. Intimacy with such a being gradually wore away all their former conceptions: and prepared them most firmly to confess him to be the son of the living God.

II. General opposition to him may be dated from the time, when the proofs of his divinity became clear and undeniable. These claims he did not assert; nor allow his disciples, or those who had received benefits from him to assert. His works which the Father had given him to do announced him as distinctly as the voice from Heaven. His were not the noisy pretensions of an impostor. They were too solemn for ridicule, which is the incontrovertible weapon of the people against all nonsense. Ridicule was never attempted with him. The facts furnished overwhelming proofs of his standing. His charge was "believe not me; but believe the works." He sought the independent convictions of the most close and careful scrutiny. It was impossible to receive him at all in any other character than divine. He was either loved with all the heart, or intensely hated; he was either worshipped or abhorred. The opposition kept even pace with the demonstration of his divinity.

While in every respect he was a man, he was yet separate from sinners, as the heaven is higher than the earth.

All men are liars. It does not take a thousand lies to make a liar. The sacred lips of Jesus were never polluted by a lie; the shade of deceit never darkened his countenance. "In his lips was no guile."

All men are haters; murderers in heart. Their bosoms burn with malignant passion. Love exists in the human soul: but only towards friends; and them it does not love sufficiently until they are dead. Jesus was all love to friend and foe. His eye shone with heavenly compassion even to his murderers.

He was all purity. Never had a blush passed over those innocent features: of shame he was incapable.

Before him there was no place for hypocrisy. To deceive him was hopeless; and in his presence self-deception seemed impossible. He came "that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed." It had been as easy to hide the sun at midday, as for an individual to avoid the light of the sun of righteousness. All before him stood revealed in their native colors; sensible, that in spite of themselves every veil was torn away. His like never stood on earth; before

whom disguises vanished, and all efforts at concealment ceased. A character might be assumed before him; but the mask was instantly dropped; and the man was unconsciously betrayed into acting his true self.

There never was a more perfect development of real human nature, than in the days of Jesus of Nazareth. All were constrained in some wonderful manner to cast aside their seeming, and to act their real selves; and doubtless many were surprised into words and behavior unaccountable in their own view, nevertheless exhibiting a faithful picture of the human heart, like a fiend of woe gnashing the teeth at the view of unsullied innocence and heavenly love. It stands as a wonder of history, that there was a Judas.

III. The land rang with slanders.

He was scornfully reported to be a "Nazarene." That he was born in the city of David was recorded not only in the genealogical tablets, but in the blood of the innocents.

"He is a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber." He went wherever he was invited, to the table of friend or enemy. On such occasions, some of his most interesting and forcible discourses were uttered. The sabbaths were feast-days with the Jews, all preparations being made on the day previous.

"He receiveth sinners and eateth with them." If the Magdalen became a saint from contact with him; and Zaccheus a friend of the poor: theirs was a blessed association.

"He eateth bread with unwashen hands." Forbidden by the traditions, not by the word of God.

"He keepeth not the Sabbath day." "Ought not this woman, whom Satan hath bound these eighteen years, to be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?" It is the very day for such a joyful deliverance.

"He forgiveth sins." Those who received the blessing were able to testify. The absolution of a priest cannot take away the sense of criminality.

"Thou maketh thyself God." Not so. What did the works declare?

"He hath a devil." In this way they accounted for the super-human in him. They saw in him a composure that could not be ruffled, a compassion that could not be angered,

a self-possession that no surprise could take off its guard, a peace deep and unchangeable as a river; and they said: "He hath a devil." He was for "a sign spoken against."

To all these allegations, the Lord paid no more attention, than to the accusations made before Pilate and Herod. The majesty of infinite wisdom was in all his conduct. He employed himself in going over all the cities of Israel undeterred by clamor. "Who is blind, but my servant, or deaf as my messenger that I sent?" Though few accepted him in his true character, he caused a deep and wide sensation; and his enemies well understood, that a leaven infused by him was silently working, whose outcome would be the overthrow of their traditionalism; the substitution of another quality of service in the place of their vain and empty formalism; and the destruction of their authority as teachers and guides of the people.

IV. The rulers began to feel the necessity of ruining him, in order to sustain their own power. They supposed themselves abundantly able to get an advantage over him in the conflict of wits; their aim was also to develop a charge against him, which would justify them in denouncing him to the Roman governor as a dangerous person. To this work they deliberately set themselves, on the occasion of his last visit to Jerusalem; sensible that the crisis of destiny was upon them.

He had entered the city as the son of David, claiming the title as his due. Before him, when he entered the temple, the sellers of sheep and oxen and the changers of money, the thieves who had made it their den, had fled. He made himself lord of the holy house, dismissed the guards, assumed its police himself; and there wrought his mighty works. On the following morning he was met by an imposing array of the chief priests and elders with the question: "by what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?" They had felt his authority to that degree, that they had not rebuked the children in their Hosannas; nor were able to stem the current of popular feeling sustaining him.

His reply utterly confounded them. He became the questioner, and shut them up to a full admission of his

authority, or a disclaimer of John the Baptist. "I will also ask you one thing, which, if ye tell me: I in likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? From heaven or of men?" This question brought up in the memory of all the venerated form of the mighty prophet of the wilderness; his singular ordinance, imposed upon all his adherents; and his positive declaration that the coming Messiah was already standing among them; and that Jesus of Nazareth was the one, on whom the centuries had waited. The memory of John was consecrated in the hearts of the people: and no subject stirred their souls more tenderly than his simple name. They would have stoned to death at once the man who presumed to doubt his mission or his testimony. The enemies were forced to confess, that John bore testimony to the man of Nazareth.

In their next assault they had certainly exhausted all their cunning in framing the attack. So certain were they of entrapping him, that they accused him to Pilate as forbidding to pay the tribute, being assured that in his position as the Son of David he could do no less. This question of the Roman tribute was the knottiest question of Jewish casuistry. Its excessive amount and its merciless collection stripped the temple of its authorized support; and drove the priests into secular callings. The conscience of the devout Jew was deeply exercised over it; and terrible uprisings had occurred in resistance to its payment. Not daring to appear themselves, the priests and rabbis sent their disciples as conscientious inquirers, who voiced the universal sentiment when they said: "Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth. Tell us therefore, what thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar or not? Shall we give? Or shall we not give?"

His answer on seeing the money with the image and superscription of Caesar upon it, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's," was conclusive. You acknowledge subjection to Caesar by using his money; therefore pay the tribute he requires.

Further, the stamp of God's ownership is on all that he has made; his image is impressed upon the souls and bodies of his creatures; and the superscription of his right and title to their service and affection is legible, written on every heart. The debt, which men owe to God their maker, is prior to all others; and the tribute which he requires is enforced by a claim superior to all others. Men demand what is their rightful due; and shall not God? "Render unto God the things which are God's." "And they marveled at him, and held their peace."

The beauty of his replies consists in that, while the hearts of his antagonists were full of debate, and their lips ready to overflow with objection, it was not possible to utter a word in answer. His rejoinders were instant, and offered without a moment's reflection; and unanswerably determined the matter, and cut off all debate.

His resolution of the standing difficulty of the Sadducean sect was equally luminous and conclusive. He proved to them the immortality of the soul, and the resurrection of the body, from God's own words spoken out of the burning bush: "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Abraham had at the time been dead four hundred years. "God is not the God of the dead": therefore Abraham still lives, an undying spirit; and in due time will take possession of the resurrected body; both of which united constitute the man. "All live unto him," the great creator. All are under supreme obligations to seek his honor and glory in every act, even the smallest. Eating and drinking not to satisfy the demands of appetite, so much as to glorify him the Lord of all.

The question of the scribe: "Master, which is the great commandment of the law?" was answered in a manner that carried conviction with it. No command of circumcision, tithing, or Sabbath-keeping can compare in obligation with the command to love God with a love real, genuine, sincere, supreme, and unending.

His enemies "were gathered together" against him; foiled as they had been in all their attempts to ensnare him, they could not leave him: sensible, that in that struggle their rule and authority were at stake. They were there

in a body before him: and in his turn, he became the questioner. His question respected his own claims: "What think ye of the Christ? Whose son is he?" "The son of David." Why then doth David in spirit call him Lord?" "If then David call him Lord, how is he his son?" They could not answer without admitting all he claimed. "No man was able to answer him a word; neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any questions." The quickness and conclusiveness of his replies cutting off all rejoinder, filled the listeners with amazement.

Here was a complete triumph of truth and innocence over intrigue and subtlety. Authority respected for ages was in danger of being overthrown. Respect for the rulers and confidence in their judgment was disappearing like morning mists. The foundations of their ascendancy were being shaken. An obscure and despised teacher was demolishing the superstructure, which their class had been erecting with long effort.

But this was not all. He not only foiled their assaults: but while they stood speechless and cowering before him, he uttered the discourse preserved to us in Matt. xxiii: the most severe ever delivered. He pronounced against them eight solemn woes, which must have sounded to them like trumpets of doom, exposing the folly and wickedness of their teachings. The hearts of the people were with him; they hung upon his lips; drank in every word: and were completely swayed by him. Had he said like Elijah of old, "take them alive, let not a man of them escape"; had he even demanded their blood: his behest might not have been refused. He was irresistible as an anointed king. Fear, as well as hatred, from this moment rendered his enemies desperate and implacable.

Had he at this critical point assumed kingly power; the multitude might with their own hands have put away his opposers: but at this most favorable juncture, when his enemies were in his power and trembling in apprehension of his next step, he declined all destructive measures: and was content with exposing their wickedness. It was the same Jesus who could weep and condemn. The multitude saw with the plainest demonstration, that the policy

of kings was not the rule of his conduct: that he would never step to a throne through blood; or wrest a sceptre by violence. As he said to Pilate: "If my kingdom were of this world: then would my servants have fought: but now my kingdom is not from hence."

V. The chief priests and elders saw that the only way remaining to them to destroy him, was by violence; and they hesitated not at the dreadful determination. His miracles were more glorious than ever: he was undisputed master of the temple, and of the confidence of the people: and they came to the dire resolution, as they could not contend with him openly, to compass his arrest before he left the city; but not until the feast was passed, and the people were dispersing to their homes.

The disciples saw that a deadly contest was approaching: that it would be a strife for authority and influence and even life: they saw that the rulers were tremendously excited; but that their master was perfectly calm: and they were not afraid. They were secure that he would triumph to the end. They had seen the elements bow before him, and diseases flee at his word; and they were not afraid. He had been preserved from the sword of Herod: from the rage of the men of Nazareth: he had passed through a crowd that had stones in their hands, and murder in their hearts; and as he passed each man, the stone dropped from his hand: and they feared not; but that he would still be preserved. They had seen the greatest men in the nation quail before him: officers deputed to arrest him decline the service: and they were not afraid. They knew that even if a hostile hand were raised against him: one look could make an enemy a friend: and they were not afraid. They knew that his single word was stronger than legions of angels: and they were not afraid. It never entered their thoughts that he could die, before Israel was delivered. They had not attended to his repeated predictions, that he should die.

The positions of the two parties respectively was this. The rulers had consented to his ascendancy during the eight days of the feast, as they were powerless to prevent it: but, as soon as the feast was over, their most determined

purpose was, that he should die. They could hardly wait the time, or endure the rage that drove sleep from their eyes, until their object was attained. The friends of Jesus had no organization, or policy, or strength or head but himself; and in him they were secure and had no fear for the result. At this juncture the unexpected opportunity offered to the rulers of taking him by the treachery of one of his disciples.

VI. He actually suffered himself to be taken at the dead hour of night by foes with lanterns, and torches, and weapons. In addition to this surprise, his whole appearance had undergone an unaccountable change. His composure, which nothing had ever been able to disturb, had quite forsaken him. Three of his friends had heard him pray as he had never prayed before with unutterable groanings; they had seen by the light of the moon his face pale with more than human agony; yea, even his raiment was marked by stains of perspiration that looked more like blood; and he seemed to be sinking into an abyss of horror.

When he was troubled, their strength was gone: when he failed, to them all was lost. True, a celestial visitor had hovered over the prostrate form in the garden; true, his look had smitten the soldiers to the ground; his touch had healed the wound of Malchus; but he was taken, and did not deliver himself. But what was most remarkable was the deep anguish and horror, which had engrossed him. He was overwhelmed with a mental suffering, which was to his disciples an inexplicable phenomenon. Had he only borne his usual look of confidence and strength: the courage of his friends had not sunk, as it did.

It was to them a night of fearful temptation. What could account for that nameless agony which their master endured? was he an imposter in league with Satan, whom God had permitted for a season; but had now forsaken? The enemy of souls made all the capital possible out of the change in the appearance of their trusted lord, and his apparent weakness and failure; and cast his fiery darts to destroy their faith. The most painful thoughts agitated their bosoms: and as soon as they had seen him taken under

such a load of anguish as oppressed him; his disciples forsook him and fled. "They were offended because of him."

One of them, or perhaps two, however, followed to the high priest's house, with the still lingering hope, that the scene might be changed; but there, the scorn and hatred shown were so overwhelming, that the boldest of the twelve denied with oaths and curses, that he had ever known the man. Another disciple stood on Calvary with the aged mother leaning on his arm; but he stood there only to see the victim die. He had been condemned with insults unparalleled before, and nailed to a Roman cross amid a roar of blasphemy.

Perhaps in this disciple the hope still lingered, that the innocent sufferer might disappoint his enemies; but he died. John waited after he apparently died. The thing was placed beyond a doubt. He saw a rude soldier, to make assurance doubly sure, strike his sunken and unprotected side with a spear-thrust that reached to the heart, and spilled his very heart's blood; true, there were terrible sights and sounds from opening tombs, and riven rocks, and a trembling earth; the heavens were black without a cloud; but there was no deliverance. He died; the hope of Israel died. His enemies had triumphed in the decisive hour.

Had not God watched the body, it might have been dragged in wanton insult through the streets of Jerusalem; but he terribly protected it; not a bone was broken: it was not cast out.

This was evidently the decisive point in the minds of enemies and friends: if he is overcome, he cannot be the Messiah; nothing can more certainly settle the question. The sympathies of the people had for a time been with the Nazarene; but when they saw him bound unresisting, whom they had looked upon as the possible Messiah, and even dying, seemingly forsaken of God and man; like the disciples, "they were offended because of him:" a mighty revulsion of popular feeling followed his arrest.

VII. But the drama was not yet concluded. On the third day at early dawn, an earthquake disturbed guilty Jerusalem. The Roman guards around the sepulchre had been thus far uninterrupted in their watch: but suddenly a supernatural

light gleamed upon their armor; and a terrible angel was in their midst, whose countenance was like lightning, whose raiment was white as snow, and the touch of whose foot upon the earth had made it tremble. The dismayed soldiers saw the stone move to the wave of his hand: the tomb open; and had no eyes for any other sight. Everything else was forgotten in the palsy of fear; and every flash of the spirit eyes made their hearts stand still.

Though the priests denied the resurrection of Jesus, and the whole case turned upon this issue: yet they could not produce the body; though it had been safely kept in a chamber of rock, under a military guard. The purpose of the rulers evidently had been to exhibit the body on the third day, confound the disciples, disabuse the world, and crush the rising sect at once. All yet accomplished, the crucifixion of the leader, the scattering of the disciples, would be of no avail, without the exhibition of the corpse.

The third day came, and instead of having the body in their possession; the tale was circulated that it had been stolen, in spite of all their precautions; by whom was uncertain: The dispirited disciples became bolder than lions, filled Jerusalem with their doctrine, and charged the rulers with having slain their own Messiah. Multitudes believed them, and embraced Christianity in a way decisive of the fact of the resurrection.

The rulers were afraid to touch the men who brought this charge against them; and accepted the counsel to let them alone. The potter's vessels had dashed against the rock.

VIII. In the light of this event, the disciples saw, that their master had not been overcome. His enemies had but accomplished the divine purposes. So utterly dejected however were the twelve: that their slowness to believe his resurrection seems to us as strange as their previous treachery. They seem to have given him up almost entirely. Unbelief, like the palsy of death, had settled upon them; so that they listened unheeding to the reports of his appearance. When compelled to admit the fact, the revulsion in their minds was from the extreme of depression to the enthusiasm of courage. They recalled his predictions: with

new light they searched the Scriptures; they learned the necessity and nature of his atonement; and their zeal could not be damped by the fear of death itself.

The views of the twelve were never clear respecting the work of the redeemer, until the whole drama was enacted; and the cross cast its light over the whole course of his life.

Such is a brief epitome of the gospel story, to the details of which attention now turns.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE EXPULSION OF THE TRADERS FROM THE TEMPLE.

This was the only occasion on which our Lord assumed executive authority. This act was really the introduction of the ministry. He attended but two passovers at Jerusalem during his ministry; and on each visit he purged the sacred edifice from the traffic, licensed by those who had it in their charge. That the cleansing occurred but twice, is sufficient proof that he was not oftener present at the passovers. He "suddenly came to his temple;" indeed his appearance before the Jewish nation was sudden as the falling of a flaming meteor from the sky. The population of Bethlehem may have been often scanned with a view to the discovery of the coming man; but none ever looked to Nazareth. The inhabitants of that town themselves never suspected that Jesus was other than the son of Joseph: his mother had kept her own cherished secrets still. The scene of the baptism by John was a surprise and a revelation to all. For the first time in the world's history a window had been opened in heaven: and a light not of the sun had shone from the world of glory; and the voice, silent since Sinai, had announced the presence of the one in whom God is well pleased: that one was the Nazarene.

This present was his first approach to the holy city in his new character: and naturally the deepest interest was felt in all his movements there. He came with the prestige of the heavenly recognition; the rumor of the miraculous powers exhibited at Capernaum had also preceded him; and the assembled nation looked with liveliest expectations for developments. The attitude of the Jewish mind was favorable to him: and whatever he might do, he was certain of no opposition. They believed in him: and with breathless concern awaited his action.

From the first and through his whole course, the predominant feeling towards him in the minds of all was fear. He, who had control of disease and death, who had the forces of nature subservient to his order, had the power to inflict as well as to heal. None would hastily array themselves against the supernatural. His short ministry would have been violently terminated long before it was; had it not been for this fear of him. Often hands would have been laid upon him, but for this restraint. His enemies waited long and schemed persistently to destroy his influence without assailing himself by violence. The Nazarenes feared to cast him headlong from their hill; the gain-sayers in Jerusalem with stones in their hands hesitated to throw them; the officers, whose errand it was to seize him, still failed of their purpose; and they never dared to attempt his arrest in the light of day; but only in the midnight and with men enough for some perilous enterprise. This fear in undiminished influence held every soul at the time of this beginning of his course in Jerusalem. The assembled nation waited on him. Though our knowledge of the details of his procedure in this case is exceedingly limited, yet this cleansing of the holy house is one of the great landmarks of his ministry, being its real commencement before the assembled nation: and as such merits particular notice.

The only place in the city, which offered attractions for him, was the house where God had set his name, which possessed a sanctity never participated but by Sinai at the time of the theophany; now however subject to gross profanation, by consent of its appointed guardians. A regular market, held at times within the very walls of the holy court, had become an established institution. A devout attendant upon the temple service on the days of traffic, could not fail to be intensely annoyed by the incessant lowing of oxen, and bleating of sheep confined in places strange to them, and in the midst of surroundings as strange, coupled with the voices of traders and customers necessarily shouting out loudly the haggings of trade.

Amid the continuous babel of sounds, a devout and intelligent worship was impossible. The whole solemnity was

changed into a mere mummerly; and the holy place was disgraced by a struggle for gain more dishonoring, than was permitted in any heathen fane. The worship of mammon was silencing the worship of Jehovah. This traffic had monopolized the court of the Gentiles; and no foreigner of Gentile blood could possibly make an attempt at worship in the purlieus appropriated to such. It is known that such liberties were not taken with the holy house until the accession of Annas to the high priesthood; and that he schemed to replenish his own resources by such simony. It was however a great public scandal and grief of heart to those, who still retained a regard for sacred things; and such were still a large class.

When our Lord entered the sacred precincts; and his ears were saluted with this turmoil of man and beast; and he beheld the defilement of the consecrated space; he was at once roused to a zeal that allowed no hesitation. Offences against himself awakened no such indignation; but infringements of his Father's house or day stirred him to a speedy interference. His "fury came up into his face," and his zeal transformed the very appearance of his person. He assumed at once an air of overwhelming prerogative; and his form became worthy of an imperial jurisdiction. A new light shone in his eyes, and a consciousness of most intimate relation to the great being so dishonored, revealed itself in his countenance.

Arming himself with a small scourge, to be used on the animals only, regardless of the numbers to be encountered, and the authority behind them, he at once proceeded to abate the nuisance. What rendered this trade more odious still, was the extortion practiced by both brokers and venders of animals, who charged excessively for the exchange of money and for animals bearing the stamp of the priestly inspector, as being without blemish, and suitable for sacred use.

To effect the expulsion of this trade was no small undertaking. The temple area comprised nine acres of ground by modern measurement of remaining foundations, nearly one-half of which constituted the court of the gentiles. More than a quarter million of lambs were required for

each passover, which were disposed of from the tenth to the fourteenth day of the month, making sixty thousand sales per day, a large portion of which took place in this court, besides sales of bullocks, doves and young pigeons. If each flock of one hundred lambs had its keeper, the number of men engaged was not small.

The account of our Lord's proceeding is so succinct, that we hardly have material to picture the scene: but of some particulars we are apprised.

1. He accomplished the purgation alone, unaided. He had no accomplices to co-operate in a simultaneous attack upon the animals, to drive them out by force or by strategy. His disciples stood by in silent astonishment, and merely witnessed the procedure. "Of the people, there was none with him;" no one assisted more than they did at the raising of Lazarus, or when he gave eyes to the man born blind. Indeed, he did not address himself to the animals chiefly; but to the men in charge of them.

2. It was effected without violence or tumult. No effort was made to stampede the flocks to their serious injury: as would have resulted, if droves of sheep by the thousand, with cattle intermixed, had been rushed in mass through the gates. The riddance was effected with deliberation and without such haste as to threaten damage. There was no pell-mell discharge. Not a lamb was injured, not a dove released. The actor did not put on the frenzy of a madman, or assume the prophetic fury, or employ any tactics, whose audacity might surprise the keepers into compliance. The history is sufficiently explicit to show, that he proceeded with due regard to the safety of the property, and the consent of those entrusted with it. The scripture was still fulfilled, "he shall not strive, nor cry, neither shall any man hear his voice in the street." No unnecessary demonstration attended the performance. His works were all wrought with the smallest possible appeal to public notice. This work was carried out with the same quiet but irresistible efficiency; and could but have been hailed by the devout as a sign of the returning vitality of their religion.

3. It was executed in the most high handed and summary manner. It is to be supposed, that in some way not

related, he secured the attention of the crowd, and made proclamation of his purpose. His voice had a tone to penetrate through an audience of tens of thousands. His appearance must have produced a sensation. His presence always seemed to bring God nearer, and to invest the dim and shadowy conceptions of him with a living reality. None beholding him could divest himself of a strangely increased sense of accountability to God. Now he rose to the emergency with a demeanor, which brought to their remembrance, that Jehovah had never suffered his court to be defiled with impunity; and that terrible judgments had avenged such audacity; the records of which in their own scriptures came with terrifying force back to their treacherous memory, and overcame them with alarm. His words were as arrows from the quiver of the Almighty shot out. It was not so much what he said, as what the voice from heaven had proclaimed; and what they saw in him. There are not lacking instances, in which men's consciences have suddenly awakened from deadly slumber in a moment, under the influence of some fearful portent, or imminent peril; and at a single flash as it were from the judgment seat, transgressors have been made to tremble under the mighty hand of God. It was so when Jesus spoke.

Passing first to the brokers' row he hurled their tables in succession to the pavement, scattering the rolling coins in all directions. He manifested a greater contempt for this class of thieves. He next proceeded to the stalls of the dove merchants, and overthrew their seats, ordering the immediate removal of the cages. The money changers were not in a position to remonstrate; for he left them on their all fours; neither had they time to enter a plea; for they were never busier in their lives, scrambling after the rolling pieces, and taking in a large area with their eyes. The dove sellers had not the courage to object; for fear that the frail structures that held their birds might go the way of the seats; and thus their property become a total loss.

He next proceeded to the enclosures of the sheep and bullocks, which were probably made with temporary and moveable fences and partitions: as no fixtures were possi-

ble upon the solid marble pavement. He swung wide open the gates of the folds, which he first reached, throwing down the structures which separated flock from flock as far as hands could reach, repeating the command: "take these things hence; make not my father's house a house of merchandise;" emphasizing the word "Father's." Striking with a sharp blow of the scourge in his hand the veteran, trained sheep, leader of the lambs, the bell wether as we call him, of which each flock had one; he started him on the back track to the gate at which he had entered. This course the uneasy animal would readily take, as an escape from enforced confinement amidst strange surroundings.

Nature animate and inanimate ever obeyed him: witness the unbroken, unbridled colt, which carried him to Jerusalem; and the fish which brought to the hand of Peter the needed coin. Flock after flock was dismissed so rapidly, as to leave no time for remonstrance from the keepers, who usually went before the sheep; and now found themselves under the necessity of rushing to the head of the line, and giving their wonted call to their own flock, these animals possessing the most acute distinction of voices of all brutes handled by man. In this way only could they prevent the intermixing of flocks to their own loss. They were of necessity very lively in their movements; and however reluctant to depart had no interval for demur, no one failing to comply with the master's command: even devils were always compelled to obey.

A similar course was pursued with the bullocks, and their guardians. The stern directions were neither disputed nor disobeyed. All were yielding to an irresistible influence, and under a spell that conquered them. The tone of the master's voice had in it the ring of absolute command; and his face was lighted with the consciousness of his own high connection with the unseen divinity of the temple: and his whole animated form revealed this persuasion. Readers of this portion of the New Testament history generally conceive, it is probable, that at this time his face was marked by harshness and anger; but his countenance probably wore no threatening aspect. There was certainly not a tinge of severity upon it, when at the gate of Geth-

semane, the soldiers went backward from his look and fell to the ground; but an unparalleled submission lent an almost celestial radiance to his features, which not only overawed the men of war, but thrilled the very soul of the Roman governor; subdued the dying thief; brought groans from spectators of the crucifixion up, as they smote upon their breasts; and extorted a confession from the rugged centurion. A wondrous tenderness was in his words, when he cursed the barren fig tree, Mark XI: 25-26, and when he doomed the holy city. Anger in the human sense he never exhibited, but imagination can never picture that countenance. In the vast court of the Gentiles there was soon but one object, on which all eyes were riveted; and a silence had soon fallen upon the place, in which no sound was heard but his own sharp command. Truly 'it was never so seen in Israel.'

Instances are on record in which strong natures have controlled and overpowered those of weaker mold: they may illustrate, but fail to explain this achievement of the lowly Nazarene, in whom the passive virtues predominated, and had their most perfect development. Unlike all human examples, the force existing in him was that of immaculate holiness, and purity without a blemish. His was the weightiest personality that ever moved on earth. His simple presence was a rebuke to evil; and the sight of him suggested a contrast in the highest degree unnerving to the beholder. No man, conscious of being in the wrong, could stand before him, or endure his gaze for two moments in succession. His look thoroughly aroused the sleeping conscience, and brought near the distant thunders of the Mount, which not even a beast could touch and live. The temple at Jerusalem was in fact another Sinai; and these desecrators of God's house painfully recollected it. The truth flashed upon them.

During the seven allotted days of the passover feast, Jesus held possession of the holy house, as he also did at the time of its second purgation, and performed many miracles in the days; as is learned from the statement of Nicodemus, and the testimony of the Galileans, who attended and witnessed them, and were thereby prepared to accept

his teachings subsequently. Indeed the purification of the temple was a lesson never to be forgotten. A more fitting initial work for the opening of the ministry of the Messiah, could not have been selected. This regard for the sanctity of the house of God he continued to enforce during the days of his occupation, against the laxity which suffered the court of the Gentiles to be made a thoroughfare for passers for the saving of distance.

No work could so commend itself to the heart of a godly Jew, nor carry with it a stronger conviction, than this work of cleansing the holy house, which had in every degenerate age been the initial work of revival, and return to the worship of Jehovah. The words of the prophet Malachi were evidently fulfilled: "Jehovah shall suddenly come to his temple, even the angel of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who shall abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he shall be like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap." He had dropped down among them as the angel of the covenant, the angel of the presence, the reformer of abuses, burning with zeal for the honor of God, like the angel of the Lord.

The immense reserved force in this calm, gentle character must have impressed thousands, as it did Nicodemus; when he saw the modest, retiring young teacher from Nazareth flashing like a sword of flame before the eyes of evil doers; and carrying out single handed and alone his work of reform over all the united power of the ruling class. It was an ungainsayable demonstration of his mission, both by the character of the work itself, and the indescribable force, by which it was effected.

It was also the most stinging condemnation of the high-priest possible, on whom chiefly rested the guilt of all this profanation. His friends and coadjutors beheld the proceedings with suppressed rage, being powerless to interpose even a word of objection. Their unfaltering hostility to the man of Nazareth had its beginning here, when this bold attack was made upon the emoluments of the office of the high priest; and what was more offensive still, the odium was cast upon him of deliberately sustaining a system of crime; de-

fyng the God whose priest he was: and provoking his heaviest judgments. No surer course could have been devised by an enemy to destroy all reverence for Jehovah, as well as to annul the prestige of the place, than by encouraging such encroachment. These men had probably made the proposal to Jesus to commit the direction of his ministry to them, the established guides of the people. This work of judgment beginning at the house of God was his answer.

Our Lord vindicated his procedure by the claim of sonship to the almighty father. No phrase of more indefinite meaning and vague application was in use at the time than this: the "son of God." The voice from heaven had designated this Jesus as the beloved son of God in no uncertain sense. Words coming from this source are used with no equivocal meaning. The title of the son of God belonged to him in the sense, that his humanity was of immediate divine production; but it was his also in an infinitely more elevated sense. In respect of his divinity, he was the eternal Son of the eternal Father. He stood upon the loftiest pedestal of pretension from the earliest commencement of his course: and never abated one jot or tittle of the supremest claims. To the ears of the stubborn monotheists, ignorant of the tri-personality of the divine nature, this had the sound of blasphemy. They could not receive it: his twelve even did not realize its full meaning until he was gone: and it was a difficulty in the way of the whole nation. It was difficult for the disciples to adjust his standing in their own minds, in harmony with their belief in one only living and true God.

His standing was fully announced before the conclusion of the feast however. The occasion of declaring it came about by the act of the opposers themselves. The evangelist John calls them "the Jews," by which term he evidently designates the leaders of the people, and the representatives of Judaism. During the progress of the purgation, they had held their peace; but on one of the subsequent days, they approached the reformer with this question: "What sign showest thou, seeing that thou doest these things?" It is to be noted that their demand was

made with the most intense acrimony, by those who were disposed to antagonize to the bitter end one, who presumed to usurp control of their affairs.

It is plain from the answer of Christ: that they were angry enough to destroy him then and there; and as our Savior looked upon them, he saw the witnesses who would swear away his life, and the men who would lead the storm of insult and abuse around his cross. They surveyed him from head to foot with eyes that shot deadly malice already. The loftiness of his demeanor had not left him yet; and they beheld before them the beau ideal of kingly authority. With assumed prerogative they demanded fiercely: "What sign showest thou?" "Destroy this temple," he replied, as you are willing to do even now: "and in three days I will raise it up again." His accompanying gesture left no uncertainty about his meaning: his arms were possibly folded across his breast. They understood his meaning, confirmed as it was by subsequent declarations to the same effect reported to them; and afterwards said to Pilate, "we heard him say, after three days, I will rise again." Two witnesses here present, probably members of the sanhedrin, knowingly put a false construction on his words and swore to a false interpretation of them.

In our Lord's answer two remarkable assertions are contained: 1. That the house of stone and marble had lost its divine occupant, having never indeed possessed the Shechinah. The indwelling deity, no longer with them, had taken up his abode in the flesh and body of the Nazarene. His own humanity was now the only temple. In this answer there was a plain announcement that the divinity revealed at Sinai, and worshiped in the tabernacle in the wilderness, and afterwards in the temple, was now incarnate in the person of this Jesus: and that his bodily presence in this second inferior house made it more glorious than the magnificent structure of Solomon, on which riches untold had been lavished. It was evident to all beholders that he had the consciousness of the majesty, which he claimed. It continued with him to the end, and found utterance in his dying words. That he believed in himself it is impossible to deny: that he was not in error his whole

life shows on every page. 2. His answer also contains the prediction of his resurrection after three days, which was to be "a sign" indeed that would arouse the world: establish a new kingdom on earth, the kingdom of heaven; and introduce a new element into society, which will finally create all things anew.

CHAPTER IX.

NICODEMUS. JOHN III.

John the Evangelist gives us the account of the opening of Christ's ministry in Judea, where he was present as a disciple; and of the conversation with Nicodemus, which he was privileged to hear and report. This man Nicodemus is to us, perhaps, the most interesting inquirer exhibited in the gospel history; because we have a more distinct view of the process of his conversion, than is afforded in other cases. We see him in the first stage of anxious and painful struggle, intensely ashamed of the interest, which he felt in the Nazarene, whom he recognized as a teacher sent of God; he appears before us again at the time of his first avowal of conviction and belief, when his associates in the council were so startled by his abrupt declaration; that the sanhedrin broke up without a formal adjournment: and "every man went to his own home," wondering what next: and we see him finally step out before the world, a loving adherent and friend of the crucified one, in the hour of the midnight depression, and apparent defeat of his cause.

He was old, and rich, and of the highest standing among his countrymen; and so passed through the most intense and protracted mental conflict, until truth finally conquered Jewish prejudice, Pharisaic self-righteousness, and worldly entanglements. These three glimpses of a soul in its passage from death unto life give the history a surpassing interest. He expresses the very feelings common to all men just coming to the apprehension of the necessity of spiritual regeneration: he maintains the most profound silence respecting his feelings even to his friends and colleagues for the space of more than two years: blurts out at length his convictions to the utter amazement of his associates: and ends by adopting the cause of the Nazarene,

in the hour of darkest gloom in all its progress. We can but feel the deepest sympathy through all the way. That he was a most sincere and earnest inquirer, the very shame which he felt is proof. A mere uninterested speculator is never ashamed: he is equally fluent on religious subjects as on other: an earnest inquirer after personal salvation is always ashamed; and his tongue is almost palsied. This shame which Nicodemus felt is proof of his deep sincerity, and profound personal interest. Whenever his name is mentioned, it is added that he came to Jesus by night; because though knowing him to be a teacher sent from God, he did not dare to come by day.

But he was determined to seek an interview: and that in spite of the reluctance and fear and shame, which moved to deter him. He would resist the suggestions of an evil nature, and still in some way secure further instruction. He that would be saved enters upon a conflict. We may be sure that on that night he endeavored to hide from every one the direction of his walk: after his arrival at the place, that he hesitated and debated with himself before he entered: that he passed through a struggle before he revealed himself: that he sat down breathing hard, and palpitating with effort. The great "master in Israel" became an humble inquirer. We infer from the use in illustration, which the Lord made of water: that Nicodemus had been a disciple of the Baptist, and was apprised of his testimony to Jesus. He was one of those who were "looking for salvation in Israel."

The opinion of his deep sincerity is confirmed by the fact, that the Savior made to him the fullest discovery of his own high personality, and the mission, upon which he had been sent, ever made in any recorded interview. Indeed, the whole system of theology is contained in the words of that conversation. The first effort of the great teacher was to impress the necessity of a new nature in man; of a change that should be as great, as visible in the most moral pharisee, as in the vilest offender. He was no preacher of mere repentance, and a reformation of manners: but proclaimed the necessity of a new birth into a new world, a new family, a new father and a new destiny.

It required repetition, and illustration to bring the aged Jew to an apprehension of the severity and the pregnancy of the truth inculcated: but this truth appreciated and felt was only preliminary to the great subject of the love of God in the redemption of sinful men. This was the great theme of the interview, which doubtless overwhelmed the inquirer with far greater astonishment, than the mere "earthly things" treated of at the first.

The love of God is the origin of the whole work of redemption; the work of Christ is not the cause of divine pity; but the effect. The heart of God first moved with ineffable love: and the result was that he gave his son; and Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost. Too frequently we reverse the scheme, and represent God as a stern and unfeeling executor of law, with no more tenderness than is in the marble statue of justice with its bandaged eyes and naked sword; and view the atoning work of Christ as turning aside his anger, and propitiating, and inclining him to show mercy to transgressors. How directly contrary the representation made by Christ! A love, greater than man or angels can know, whose length and breadth and depth and height can not be measured, led him to devise a method by which his banished people might be restored. Love is the most compulsory, and ingenious of all the passions of the human soul; in God it is not a passion; it is his very nature; the material of his very being; holding in him an ascendancy far higher than in us: the prime mover of the mighty attributes of his uncreated being; possessing all the ingenuity of the unfathomable wisdom, wielding all the inexhaustible forces of omnipotence. This love, supreme in the divine breast, invented a mode by which a divine person could be introduced into our humanity as a member of the race; have the sins of a guilty world all laid upon his head; and endure in their place, and for them what justice required.

Such a thought could not originate elsewhere than in God himself. In pursuance of this object, Jesus Christ, the gift of love, the messenger of love, came as one of the family of man. The very highest effort of love is a willingness to suffer for those enshrined in our affections. This Jesus

did. None could invent such a thing respecting God: had he not revealed it himself. The divinity of the doctrine is its own evidence. Such a thing so noble, so good the wildest imagination never conceived concerning him.

1. This love Christ teaches is universal, embracing all the members of the human family. "God so loved the world." If he had said: God so loved the Jews: it would have been in accord with all the prejudices and bigotry of his auditor. The Gentiles were not at all accounted of in the sight of God according to the teaching of the times: "they were only as the drippings of a cask, or like spittle." But the import of these words is, that God loved the Gentiles equally as he did the Jews. Distinction of race and blood count not with him. The object of his regard and affection is man as man. Even in our enlightened day there are those who would prefer to hear Jesus say: God so loved the church, or God so loved the elect: but this is not the tenor of the words. "God so loved the *world*." Our minds are so limited and narrow, that we cannot take in the whole idea of the entire race in our conception; and we are forced to lump all the numberless millions of men of all ages in one term "the world." We lose sight of the individual in the general; but God does not so generalize. To him every individual is present and fully appreciated in his individuality, and considered as a unit; and each one as an individual is an object of the divinee love.

When our Lord says: "God so loved the world:" the words must mean that he so loved each member of the human race, as to give his only begotten son for his individual salvation. God expressly said to Cain, that the way of acceptance and forgiveness was open to him, as well as to Abel. The words, "Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated," were spoken more than a thousand years after the men were in their graves, and had no reference to the individual brothers; but to the nations descended from them respectively. The purport of our Savior's teachings is: God so loved Cain, Esau, Judas Iscariot, the bloody Mary, Tom Paine and every other enemy of truth and right, as to give up his only begotten son to death for their salvation. 2 Cor. V: 15, most undeniably asserts that

Christ died for "all" in distinction from the saved. The word "all" cannot be narrowed down to the exclusion of any portion of mankind or of any individual: but is most sweeping and inclusive. God so loved the world not in the general and totality: but knowing intimately every distinct person, he loved them all in their separate individuality. The vilest sinner of the race God loves as David loved his Absalom, the enemy of his throne, and of his life as well.

Did not Christ weep over Jerusalem when the things belonging to their peace were hidden from their eyes? Did not God bemoan himself over the antediluvians, when "it repented the Lord that he had made man upon the earth; and it grieved him at his heart?" Jesus does not say, Would God I had died for thee; but over every lost soul he says, for thee I drank the cup of trembling, for thee I laid down my life, and gave my soul as a sacrifice. Over every generation, it repents him that he had made man upon the earth; and it grieves him at his heart. Over every generation, Christ says with tears: "how often would I have gathered thee?" "He is not willing that any should perish; but that all should come to repentance." He even makes oath: "As I live saith the Lord; I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth; but rather that he should turn and live." *i. e.* His death is a grief to me, a wound that I receive. No one then is beyond the pale of God's love. For wise and inscrutable reasons he suffers evil to prevail to the eternal ruin of multitudes; because men are left to the freedom of their own will. The responsibility for this ruin is on themselves.

God's love to every individual is real and unfeigned. There is a vast amount of pretended affection on earth; but accursed be the thought of hypocrisy or deceit in him. Love has its origin and home in the bosom of God, and like coals of juniper it has a most vehement flame. Waters cannot quench it, nor floods drown it: "like the fierce burnings in the coal oil regions which floods cannot check, which can only be left to burn themselves out: only God's love can never exhaust itself.

Are we severally the objects of such a love? If we deny or doubt it we are rejecting the testimony of "the faithful and true" witness. If any would put this to the test, let him come to Jesus Christ in the exercise of a real faith; and he shall know for himself, if the reality does not surpass the report; and not the half can be told. Such is the nature of faith that to doubt is to reject.

2. Our Lord here teaches that the love of God surpasses belief. "If I have told you earthly things and ye believe not; how shall ye believe if I tell you heavenly things?" The regeneration of the soul is an earthly thing, and if you can hardly believe what I tell you of it: were I to tell you of the love that moves in the heart of God, which is a heavenly secret; how could you believe? There is something in it that the largest faith can scarcely credit; and yet the only witness, capable of testifying from his own personal knowledge of it, is the speaker, being the son of man, who came down from heaven, and yet is in heaven still. All others are heresay witnesses; he "speaks what he knows and testifies to what he has seen;" and his testimony is true.

There is a tenderness of sympathy in God, an ardor of desire for our salvation, a slowness and hesitation in punishing, a tireless long-suffering, of which men can form no conception. His love passes all creature affection, as the heavens are higher than the earth. The sun's height is computed, and is nearly a hundred millions of miles; but the height of the heavens cannot be stated in figures of man's arithmetic. The light of some of its shining stars has required thousands of years to reach us. His thoughts are higher than the heavens. His love surpasses all the wonders of his creative works, and the infinities of his being. The mighty strength of his nature moves in this channel. The ruling, determining power in the mighty circle of his uncreated endowments is love.

Standing in the chamber of sickness and death, or in the cemetery by the open grave, exhibitions of the sincerest affection are often seen; and often has the thought arisen; real love is here weeping, does God love as tenderly? Sometimes separation means death to the survivor. Does God so cling to the objects of his affectionate regard? And we

fall back upon the testimony of the faithful and true witness; and rest assured that the fondness of a creature's love is ice compared with the warmth of the love of God. A mother's love stands as an example of the strongest human affection; but the scriptures tell us that God's love far exceeds. Its channel is deeper, its current is stronger, its volume is immeasurable.

Are we the objects of such a love? Is the lowest, the poorest, most despised child of earth cherished in the divine regards with such an intensity of devotion? Is his welfare so dear to the great Father? and we fall back upon the words of the faithful and true witness; and believe. "Eye has not seen; neither has ear heard; neither has it entered into the heart of man to conceive" the infinite love of God. Could we borrow the language of angels, it would not vehicle the soul-dissolving truth. Could we call from the skies the loving John or the enraptured Paul, he could only say, that the words of earth are insufficient to describe the reality, which might be felt; but could not be told. Lips of clay can never utter it; the burning tongue of seraph could never tell it. Gabriel could say no more than that it passes knowledge; and when the attempt is made to declare it, the heavenly host are dumb with wonder; and it remains untold.

Can the world be governed by such a being? do all men share in the affection of such a Father? And we fall back upon the words of the faithful and true witness, who knows the deep things of God. A flood of evil has certainly struck this world, upon whose disastrous current the race are being borne downward to a dark perdition: we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities like the wind are carrying us away hell-ward, as the storm drives the withered leaves. The heart of the best is a deep sea of iniquity: the ways of God are inexplicable to our short sight; but we rest upon the words of the faithful and true witness; and trust, where we cannot understand. We see but in part and know but in part. When the day dawns and the shadows flee away, we shall comprehend somewhat of that love, which the world will in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto them.

3. He loved them in their sins. This is the strangest feature of the story. It is no wonder that he loves angels: for they are holy: it is no wonder that his tender mercies are over the brutes: for they are incapable of sin; that the sun shines for the beasts of the field: and that the earth spontaneously yields their food: that he feeds the ravens and supplies the young lions: these have never raised rebellion against his will, nor stabbed him by their ingratitude. But it is unspeakably wonderful that he should love sinners, wilful and wanton and stubborn rebels. When the sins of men cause the creation to groan, and the very ground utters loud cries to heaven for vengeance for the crimes committed upon it, it is wonderful that a holy God should not only forbear his punishment: but that the bowels of divine compassion should move toward the guilty authors of evil. "How strange the love that him inclined!"

It was not love in the human sense; for there was nothing in man to love. It was the purest, most unselfish affection possible. There are sights which sicken the beholders, from which they turn away unable to bear the view: the sight of sin affects a holy God in just this manner. It excites intolerable loathing: he does not look upon it. What is there to him attractive in the blind, ungrateful, sinful children of this world? Is it possible that he should love the transgressors of his law? This is the most wonderful of all the wonders of his being.

Is his feeling pity? Pity is a loving sympathy for our friends, when we see them suffering. We pity the unfortunate: not the guilty; our friends not our enemies. Pity for the guilty would imply sympathy with crime. A full sense of the enormity of an offense just dries up the tears of pity; and we resign the culprit to the fate which he has wantonly brought upon himself. The office of pity is to secure aid for the unfortunate, not the guilty.

The emotion that ruled in the Godhead was then not like human love nor human pity. It was mercy: kindness to the guilty, the very purest form of love; a feeling not found in the heart of man, unknown to human nature; not existing in our experience. It led Christ to pray for his mur-

derers in their sin; it was love in the purest form it can possibly assume. This was the nature of the mighty love which furnished a savior for man: it was love to enemies, while enemies. The whole race are partakers in the dethronement of God, and the rejection and crucifixion of Christ. They stand by as sympathizers at least if not aiders and abettors; and the Savior's intercession for his murderers is really a prayer for the whole race.

4. This love is to be measured by the sacrifices which it makes. If a man gives his all for the relief of parties in whom he is interested; or surrenders his life in their behalf, the act certainly expresses the degree of his affection. It shows that he prefers their welfare to his own life. In the case before us God is doing all that he can do in behalf of sinful mortals. In Isaiah Ch. V, he asks: "What more could be done that I have not done?" Man could not be rescued by simple power: he is to be redeemed with a price; and the price exhausted the treasury of heaven: but it was paid. It was the utmost effort of divinity. God did not wait to be entreated; the provision of the deliverer was immediate, spontaneous, gushing. As soon as man fell, the Savior rushed to his rescue. The redemption was not indeed consummated till the fulness of time; but the arrangement was immediate. There was but one being of sufficient dignity and worth to satisfy the law: he that was above all law. His blood not only satisfied; it magnified the law.

An incident in the history of one of the little states of Greece, Locris, is often quoted as an instance in a human court, illustrating the sacred immutability of law, and the policy of delivering a culprit by substitution, which it well declares. The king, deeply impressed with the necessity of checking the destructive vice of adultery, enacted a law; that whoever was thereafter found guilty of this crime, should suffer as a penalty the loss of his two eyes; and that no position nor merit should shield the transgressor. His determination to enforce the law was strengthened by the evident demoralization and ruin effected by the vice, threatening the entire corruption of society. The eyes being the inlet of temptation were to be forfeited

to the law. The first delinquent was his own son, and heir of his throne: and we can imagine the stern old king upon the judgement seat, presiding at the trial of his first born, and determined at all hazards to sustain the necessary law. On full proof he pronounced the young man guilty, and sentenced him to sustain the dire punishment. The executioner was ordered to take the two eyes, which the law demanded. When one had been thrust out, the king himself descended from the throne, saying: "the law has received one eye: take the other out of my own head." The law shall have its two eyes: but spare my son.

This case exemplifies the principle of substitution: but here the criminal endured one-half of the sentence. In our case Christ sustains the whole penalty, pays the whole debt and we are exempt entirely. In all our afflictions and sufferings there is nothing penal; they are but disciplinary. Not one drop of the cup of trembling are we to drink: Christ drained the whole in our stead; the cup of poison prepared for us he emptied. The law receives its full demands from our substitute; the rod of affliction smites us, but the sword of justice never. Awaking, as it were, from its sleep of ages, it descended upon the man, that was God's fellow.

How vividly must the scenes of Calvary have recalled to Nicodemus the conversation three years before in the house at Jerusalem. Every word uttered there must have imprinted itself upon the memory; as all the words of Jesus seem never in any case to have perished from remembrance. The necessity of Christ's being lifted up as the serpent in the wilderness; God's giving him to death out of his great love; that man might not perish, but have everlasting life: unintelligible before, was fully explained by the event.

The infinite dignity of the sufferer, the son of God out of the Father's bosom, who while on earth could not but be in heaven also, must have been realized when nature gave signs of woe at his death. He was "the lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." The way of salvation through him by faith was made clear. How does a lamb take away sin? by suffering the penalty. How does the offerer receive the benefit of the sacrifice? by laying his

hand upon the head of the atoning lamb, confessing and laying his sin thereon. Faith says, this my lamb dies for me: he taketh away my sin.

This man Nicodemus evidently had not in him the stuff of which leaders are made. In his night interview with Jesus he did not use the singular personal pronoun at all. He spoke the convictions of others, as well as his own. "We know that thou art a teacher come from God. "Of the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him." And when in the council afterwards the taunting question of the scribes, "have any of the rulers, or of the Pharisees believed on him?," forced him to avow his conviction of the innocence of the Nazarene; his avowal was not open, but covert. The drift of his speech was, "doth our law condemn any man, before it hear him and know what it doeth?" One at least of the rulers and Pharisees considered his course with favor.

But when the insane fury of the enemies manifested itself in the choice of the most unjustifiable measures of procedure against their victim; and on the memorable day of the trial before Pilate, when "the blast of the terrible ones was like a storm against the wall;" or like the American tornado prostrating the wall, levelling the forest, and scraping off the works of man from the face of the earth like toys of the nursery, Nicodemus stood firm against the blast. The tempest of feeling swept away the disciples; shut the mouths of those who had felt the touch of the all-healing power; caused the women to stand afar off beholding; but then this man publicly showed his attachment. Yet even then he was the secondary figure. A bolder soul went in and begged the body of Pilate. Had he but been willing three years earlier to make public his allegiance to the master, whom he felt to be "a teacher come from God;" and by his own profession the Son of God, whose mission to this world could not withdraw his presence from heaven, he might have realized the joys of God's salvation all these years. He would have received "a hundred fold more in this life, houses, and brethren,

and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions:" and have occupied a far higher place in the gospel history than he now does.

CHAPTER X.

THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA. JOHN IV.

The reason of our Lord's leaving Judea, where he had been teaching, for some months probably, was because the Pharisees were irritated at his increasing popularity; and took umbrage because the people flocked to him rather than to John. Some of John's disciples also had begun to manifest a jealousy for their master, sinking as he was into an eclipse. The Savior's prudence always led him away from collisions, and he ever appeased acerbity and prejudice by yielding. His course previously announced in the prophecies of Isaiah, ch. ix: 1, led him to "honor the land of Zebulon and the land of Naphthali, where the people that walked in darkness were to see a great light." In one of these tribes Nazareth was situated: and Capernaum, in the other. For wise reasons he took Jerusalem in his way: and thence his route lay necessarily through Samaria; though from Bethaburn he might have gone by the large caravan road up the east side of the river without touching either Jerusalem or Samaria. His object, however, was to deposit the seed of gospel truth among the hated Samaritans.

He made no distinction against the hereditary enemies of his people: but having begun his ministry in Galilee, and then in Judea, he was about to extend the same gospel privileges to the Samaritans. He made no race distinction in his mighty works, blessing with equal kindness Gentile and Samaritan. Twice he vindicated the cause of the Gentiles by cleansing the court in the temple appropriated to them, embracing in equal affection all humanity. The sixth hour of the day found him sitting weary and hungry upon the rock platform of Jacob's well near the city of Sychar, a suburb of the ancient Shee-

hem. The apostle, through whom he intended to inaugurate his work of love among the Samaritans, was a woman of lax life, and not the best repute, whom the necessities of her house brought at that hour to the well for water. God can choose his own instruments, and commence a revival of purity, morality and religion by an outcast. He is wise in counsel, excellent in working and sovereign in method.

Jesus introduced the interview by asking her: "Give me to drink:" and actually drank from the vessel polluted by the unclean. His disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat. A punctilious Jew would neither eat the bread nor drink the water of the Samaritans, when compelled to pass through their land; and least of all would he use the vessels of the accursed race. The woman was surprised, and justly so, at a Jew devoid of hatred of her people, and even of contempt for a woman; and not only so, but distinguished by a benignity and humanity that shone out without concealment; and couldn't forbear expressing her astonishment at what she had never before encountered. "How is it that thou being a Jew askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?" Two causes of wonder affected her: that he should apply for relief to a Samaritan, and least of all to a woman of the interdicted blood. She was evidently put perfectly at her ease with him. Our Lord of course answered not her curiosity, and wasted no words; but full of his divine mission came at once to the point. "If thou knewest the gift of God," what wonderful blessings he has to bestow, "and who it is that saith unto thee, give me to drink, thou wouldst have asked of him: and he would have given thee living water" just as freely as you have just given to him. He directs her attention to himself as God's special messenger to dispense heavenly mercies: who waits only to be asked, in order to grant refreshments that will never fail in their reviving power.

Struck still more by the air and tone of her interviewer, she looked at him more closely. He certainly was no deceiver, and possessed evidently the fullest consciousness of greatness and power; though he had just been begging water; and he was full of a loving earnestness that amazed her. Her growing astonishment shows itself in her words:

“art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well,” which we consider so invaluable, that thou hast greater good to bestow? Jesus increases her wonder by his reply: “Whosoever drinketh of this” or any otherearthy water “shall thirst again: but whosoever, drinketh of the water, that I shall give him, shall never thirst: but the water that I shall give him shall be in him, a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.” She could not fail now to perceive that he was not speaking of material water: but of some unknown and incomparable boon, which he was ready to bestow for the asking. While it was described as water, it strongly contrasted with that element; and indicated some hidden gift not obvious to the world of observers; but springing up in the soul unto everlasting life. It could be called water only by a figure. It would resemble a well however by its depth, and by its hidden character. We know that in a well there is a perennial spring: but from whence the water comes we know not. Its origin and supply are beyond our observation; it may not depend at all on surface surroundings; but may come from some distant and mysterious source. However dry and parched the ground above may be, this fails not. Deep in the bowels of the earth, the waters circulate like the life fluid in the arteries and veins of our bodies. So to the soul that asks, God imparts a heavenly supply deep in the inner recesses of our inmost consciousness beyond our own observation, which is to us as a well that fails not, and whose waters are akin to those of the river, that flows from the throne of God.

It is not to be supposed that she understood distinctly all what he was speaking of; but she saw that he certainly had the consciousness of inexhaustible ability; and was apprised of resources unknown to her; and as she looked upon him, great thoughts of purity, and spiritual refreshment, and of everlasting life swelled in her bosom; and she asked: “Sir, give me this water: that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw,” with confused ideas, but real desire. This was the point to which the Savior was leading her, his whole effort having been to induce her to ask. At once he proceeded to business. He hears many very poor and

imperfect petitions, if sincere, though not much above the prayers of the ravens and the young lions: which the scriptures tell us that he hears and answers.

This woman was not very clear in her conceptions; but she knew that she was needy, and that the broken cisterns of earth could hold no water, no real supply: and she believed that the singular being before her could satisfy her necessities. Indeed she was needy; she was standing on the very brink of ruin; she had been seeking happiness as the brute seeks it, until she was outcast: and the prospect of something better took great hold of her; and she at last prayed. Prayer is the agony of the heart sick of earthly good, which is as "the apples of Sodom and grapes of Gomorrah." She was in no new frame of mind. The sad facts of her condition were no news to her; but one was before her, who seemed to bear to her promise of something better, some inward help that she possessed not. Her attention through the whole interview seemed to be turned more to him than to herself: there was an ever-increasing revelation of her companion. She surrendered herself to his directions: and submitted her case for his help. While she hardly knew for what she asked, she sincerely implored his help.

At this point the character of the interview changes abruptly. The great teacher has heard her prayer, and is answering her request. The first step is to show her her own heart. His words are: "Go, call thy husband:" and when she replied: "I have no husband:" Jesus said unto her, "Thou hast well said, I have no husband: for thou hast had five husbands: and he, whom thou now hast, is not thy husband. In that saidst thou truly." This was a flash from the judgment seat: and was followed probably by a long silence and abundant tears. Conscience was performing its office work: the candle of the Lord was shining through her soul; "all things that ever she did" were passing in course before her enlightened view. The faithful strivings of the spirit of truth, whose judgments are like the piercings of a sword, engrossed her attention to the oblivion of all else. Her whole life was reënacted under the keen, bright sunlight of divine scrutiny. She was being

weighed in the balances of truth and purity, and found wanting. The many-tongued voice of condemnation sounded from every side, and her sins, long disregarded, took hold of her like active enemies determined to destroy: "the arrows of the Lord, the poison whereof drinketh up the spirit," were rankling in her heart. "The terrors of the Lord set themselves in array against her;" "the commandment came; sin revived; and she died." There were great searchings of heart.

After a long continued pause, the woman lifted her head and said amid her tears and sobs: "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." It is not necessary to think, that she was endeavoring to turn off the conversation from personalities. Worship in her understanding consisted mainly of place and form, if not altogether, and this was the vital question of her sect. She knew nothing beyond the mummery of a cold externalism. Before her was one competent to decide: and it showed a great concession in her to submit this question to the decision of a Jew. He had become her spiritual director. It is natural for one hard pressed by inward conviction to seek a diversion by a discussion of something external; that under it he may escape from the inquisition of the secret, of the heart; but probably this is not a correct interpretation of this reference to the place of worship. With her the essential point to determine was where: and place gave all its acceptableness to the performance. The Jews had mutilated their own scriptures in changing the place where God had commanded an altar to be built. The Samaritan Pentateuch fixes Mount Gerizim at whose foot the conversation was being had as the place for the altar; while the Hebrew Pentateuch names Mount Ebal as the place. Our Lord evidently acknowledges the truth of the Samaritan copy.

Our Lord's answer to this inquiry of the woman allows that it was honestly made, and that it was no dodge, nor subterfuge. His statement could but carry overpowering conviction with it; that neither place, nor form nor attitude nor bodily service was of the essence of worship.

God is a spirit, and is worshipped in spirit and in truth. Wherever the spirit bows to God is a holy place. As God cannot be restricted to place, so neither can his worship be confined to any definite spot. The lions' den was a holy place to Daniel; as was the whale's belly at the bottom of the sea to Jonah; and the banqueting room of a heathen palace to Nehemiah. The omnipresent one listens to the needs of his creatures wherever they may be found. Bloody sacrifices and material offerings are to be presented at his altar in Jerusalem; and in this respect, the Jews have the precedence over all the nations of the earth. "Salvation is of the Jews."

But as the father of the race, God is accessible from any point; provided the approach to him be made not with the body, but with the spirit and in truth. It must be attempted only with the utmost sincerity. Nothing do we instinctively spurn more than dissimulation and hypocrisy; and God "desireth truth in the inward parts." He is too great to be mocked, too wise to be deceived, and too true himself to suffer attempted imposition. Instead of bringing a bleeding lamb or bleeding bullock a bleeding heart should be brought; for the humble and the contrite heart is the sacrifice with which God is well pleased. This well is the holy place; this the acceptable offering; and the present is the time. Her whole existence seemed to concentrate into the hour spent with the heavenly stranger. It was the season in which a lifetime's work was to be accomplished. He, who knows well how to bring a soul into the valley of decision, had well performed his work. Meridian sunlight never more effectually banished the darkness of nature; than these teachings, commending themselves unhesitatingly to the soundness of common reason, scattered all the mists of ritualism; and brought the full day into the soul of his auditor.

Stale as these hackneyed truths seem to us; to the one who listened in speechless surprise, they seemed the very utterance of divine wisdom, and suggested to her quick apprehension the speedy appearance of Messiah. It might be that he was before her, the long looked for Messiah; and so she said: "I know that Messiah cometh, which is called

Christ: when he is come, he will teach us all things." It was even as she thought. "Jesus saith unto her: I that speak unto thee am he." This was not said for the gratification of an unholy curiosity; but to enable his hearer to repose her full confidence in him, as the only authoritative guide of the soul; and feel that she was then resting on the rock of ages in so doing.

How rapidly he had risen in her estimation! At first he was merely a Jew of captivating appearance, condescending manners, and benign feeling. Soon she was sensible of a certain greatness about him bringing him into comparison with our father Jacob, who had given them the water. It was not long before she perceived unmerringly that he was a prophet; and after listening a short season to his teachings, that carried irresistible conviction with every word; it dawned upon her that he might be the man of promise, the one greater than prophets. While a flood of light had come upon her revealing her to herself, and making her in a short time acquainted with all the intricacies of her own heart; this same light had revealed another being standing at her side, as she awoke from her dream of sensuous life, to whom her heart went out as it would to no other, in simple trust. The good shepherd had found his wandering sheep; the father had received back his prodigal child; the Savior had arrested her on the very brink of the pit; and she was delivered and redeemed. She well understood now the meaning of the living water, and the well deep down in her lowest consciousness, whose springing up is unto everlasting life. She felt the refreshment of its draught, and would never thirst again for the filthy pools, out of which she had been drinking all her life. To her the well of salvation would never fail in its supply, and her sin-sick soul would seek no other water.

The suddenness of this discovery heightened its glory; she was as one translated out of the kingdom of darkness, into the kingdom of God's dear son. The great unseen had become to her a reality, and heaven was in full view. The unknown God was "very present;" and she had found one henceforth better and dearer than life. She had been more occupied with him than with herself; and while he had been

sending the light into her soul dark recesses: that light had so reflected upon himself; as to discover him to be her vision, as the one able to teach us all things: who can answer every question: settle every difficulty: and remove every mountain from our path.

The return of the disciples with food occurred just at this juncture, who were greatly astonished at finding him in conversation with the woman. Those who knew him best were astonished at his condescension to a Samaritan, and a woman; and were far from anticipating the glorious result of this seemingly accidental encounter: until they saw the crowd issuing from the city in search of their Master. In consequence they made no inquiry concerning his object in talking with her, and were not looking for any such outcome as developed from it: and paid no attention to what had passed. Intent on satisfying their own hunger, they thought of little else, except to prevail upon him to take the refreshment, which they knew he so much needed from his previous exhaustion, and faintness from hunger, thirst, and weariness.

Animated as he was by the impression made upon the woman, and preoccupied with the great work just opening before him, he became insensible of the pangs of hunger: and utterly refused the least morsel of nourishment, saying: "I have meat to eat, that ye know not of." From this we see how intense his emotions were over the repentance of one sinner, and the prospect of a lodgement of the truth in one of the cities of the despised and hated Samaritans. Great excitements are generally followed by such effects. The conversion of a single soul was sufficient to make him forget the demands of nature. While this demonstrates the eagerness and depth of his interest, it proves equally his perfect humanity. "In all things he was made like unto his brethren;" susceptible to all the subtle influences, by which the body and soul act and react upon each other. The revolution of kingdoms might excite him less than the salvation of a sinner.

That this was a case of undoubted conversion, we perceive in her feelings and conduct. She forgot her own waiting table, and preparations for the meal: and hurried

off to bear her testimony, and lead others to the knowledge of the Christ; and in all the succeeding history of his stay at Sychar, she appears as the prominent witness to the truth of his claims.

Her testimony seemed to have a most convincing effect, notwithstanding her previous life; owing to her complete absorption in the cause, and to the evident change in herself. Had she struck a mine of gold or gems, she could not have been more elevated: and the slightest fellowship with Jesus imparts a kindred desire to communicate in order that others may share. It is plain also that Gentiles and Samaritans were more easily convinced than Jews, whose misleading preconceptions of the Messiah, ever formed an insurmountable obstacle to the reception of the Nazarene.

He tarried at Sychar, and taught for two days: and every word carried conviction with it, and fell upon the hearts of the hearers like an arrow tipped with atoning blood. We are not informed that he performed a single miracle. Signs were necessary for the Jews: but to souls open to the truth, the very doctrine itself was its own best proof: as it commends itself to every man's conscience, finds an echo in every soul, and is demonstrated by the teaching of the Holy Ghost. The human wisdom of six thousand years' growth, condensed into the tersest phraseology, seemed folly compared with the ordinary sayings of Jesus. Not only was the truth of his teachings felt, and their power: but it was equally plain and undeniable, that he was not delivering a message from another, so much as speaking out of "the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," whose fulness resided in him. All the secrets of God were his in reserve.

Truth has an irresistible, native force; it comes with an inherent, divine authority; it is the most precious object in the universe, it is the effulgence which makes the uncreated throne too bright for mortal eyes. The light in which God dwells is the symbol of truth. Jesus Christ was the truth incarnate. The opening of his mouth like the rising of the sun brought the perfect day. Miracles only called attention to him, as the depository of divine truth. They were not needed for these Samaritans; they "heard

him themselves, and knew that he was the Christ, the Savior of the world," and needed not the testimony of the woman, nor any other proof besides. Jesus says respecting them: "Say not there are yet four months more and then cometh harvest; but I say unto you the fields are already white unto the harvest." The harvest has already begun here; and this woman is the first sheaf gathered into the granary of God, followed indeed by "many" others, on whom her influence was auxilliary.

Like her every one who receives the words of Christ, because a sower: his words are the precious seed to be disseminated and deposited in every soil. There is about them a vitality, which ensures their continuance in the ground until a favorable season arrives for their development. A reaper long afterwards may find an abundant harvest, where for many years no promise existed. The sower may have performed his work in tears, which is generally the case in spiritual agriculture; tears over the inefficiency of means, the barrenness of soil, and the want of success in efforts; but the reaper gathers in joy.

When great effects should attend the labors of the apostles, as would surely be the case, they were to remember that the most laborious part of the work had been accomplished by others amid discouragements and heart breakings; and that to God alone belongs all the glory of all the good accomplished by all the workers in his great field, who in due time will fill the hearts of sowers and reapers with heavenly joy, when the sheaves are gathered into the granary of eternal life.

CHAPTER XI.

RECOVERY OF THE CENTURION'S SERVANT IN CAPERNAUM.

When our Lord commenced his ministry, his mission, as he proclaimed it, was to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; and his favors were designed for them. Had this not been the fact, he could not have been received by the Jews at all; and his claims would not have been considered worthy of attention. Mighty works showed forth themselves in him, works of priceless benefit to helpless sufferers; relieving all the maladies of humanity; but they were wrought for the sufferers in Israel. The superiority of the Jew was so extravagantly insisted on by themselves, and his right to a preference above others in all God's merciful dealings; that not many instances are recorded in the gospels of favors accorded to aliens. Our Lord however extended his benefits to others than Jews; whenever it was possible to do so without prejudice to his mission.

The case of this centurion at Capernaum was an instance, in which a benefit to a Gentile was also a gratification to the Jewish community; even the elders of the synagogue interceding for it; and the centurion himself through conscious unworthiness declining to apply in person to the master. These elders thought it needful to labor with Jesus, in order to secure his interference in behalf of their benefactor; attributing to him a Jewish prejudice like their own: not aware that he was come to destroy that bigotry, as the sun scatters the mists of night.

The date of this miracle is fixed at our Lord's return from the Mount of Beatitudes. Two of the evangelists relate it in such manner as to forbid the suspicion of collusion. Matthew gives it in such dress, as though the applicant himself were personally present to urge his case: while we learn

from Luke, that the contrary was the fact; and that there was no personal encounter between the prophet and the soldier until the very close of the whole occurrence.

The object of Matthew in his history is to set forth the kingly character of his master; and of this he never loses sight. The centurion's ascription to him of a kingly command over all the material and spiritual forces of the universe, authorized and confirmed by the Master himself, and verified by the actual cure of the servant, was the main feature of the case to his mind. The result showed that *Jesus was king*, as described.

The keynote of Luke's gospel is quite different. Himself a Gentile, and an intimate associate of the apostle to the Gentiles, felt a different kind of interest in the transaction. It touched him in a tenderer spot. Having been overcome with astonishment at the grace of Jesus to Saul of Tarsus, he fills his memoirs with all the instances, which he can collect, of Christ's mercy to Gentiles, and to the chief of sinners. Hence Luke's account is the fuller of the two histories: and bears the traces of the intense interest of the writer in its very tone. His soul throbs with sympathy at every utterance of a deep consciousness of unworthiness by a sinner: and stands transfixed with amazement at the grace of the Lord Jesus.

Few more interesting personages pass before our view in the Gospel history than this Roman captain. Instances of piety are not so common in the profession of arms; and when they occur, they are more conspicuous by reason of their infrequency. Besides, there are things connected with a soldier's life, which help to develop in occasional cases a very high grade of the most fervent devotion. Such are the habit of unhesitating obedience to authority, the decision of character which becomes a second nature, the boldness and daring cultivated by the class even to the jeopardy of life. From such causes there sometimes appear the most shining examples of piety among military men. Many such are presented in the scriptures from Joshua to David; when the bravest heroes of the battlefield were the holiest men. And in later times, mention needs only to be

made of Havelock and Gordon and Gardner to satisfy us that an humble Christianity may be the highest ornament of a soldier.

Such an one meets our view in the brief description of this centurion. Having his permanent headquarters in Capernaum, he had long been a proselyte to Judaism. He had abandoned idols for the one living and true God. The emptiness and folly of heathenism had been forsaken for the sublime, elevating, and invigorating creed of monotheism. Though a citizen of the city which had conquered the world, he had been conquered by the truth held by a subject and despised race. He loved the nation of the Jews as being the people of God, and the depository of the oracles of truth: and at large expense had built them a synagogue. Such a man stood alone, in the armies of the day; and was able to stand alone, with the respect of friend and opposer as well. Downright sincerity commands respect.

He could read the scriptures of the Old Testament with a better understanding of them than the Jew: because he was not hampered by the Jewish preconception of a worldly hero in their expected Messiah. This veil was not over his eyes. The divinity of the coming one, however plainly announced in the prophetic records, had lapsed from the creed of the Jew; and the claim of it, in the case of the Nazarene, made him a stone of stumbling and rock of offence. This once heathen read the word of God with a better understanding. He was looking for one, "a child given, a son born" to the Jews, who could appropriate the title of "the mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, of the increase of whose government and peace there should be no end, upon the throne of David to order it and establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even forever."

What first attracts attention in his words is his evident and wonderful humility, so unexpected in a Roman; the same humility before Christ, which he felt in the profoundest abasement of his soul before the holy and heart-searching Jehovah. We gain from these words the reason why he had not presented himself as the suitor for the desired favor. There is but one being before whom the human soul

can take such an attitude. Angels who have never sinned are humble: men, who know themselves to be sinners, can find no place low enough for them to occupy, no dust mean enough.

In the whole ministry of the Son of God, no one was found who more correctly realized the impassable distance between him and men. The feelings of this Roman officer resemble those of the disciples, after the resurrection of their master had overawed them. They had previously indeed acknowledged him as truly divine; but had been far from apprehending the measureless significance of the admission. This man fully realized what they in words professed. What they believed, he *knew*; and the sense of it crushed him. He did not so much believe Jesus to be the Messiah, the Son of God, as he felt and knew it. His conviction had the certainty of knowledge. Nothing is in the sight of God more lovely and distinguishing than a contrite and humble spirit. It is the dwelling place of the High and Lofty one. "To this man will I look, who is poor and of a contrite spirit;" as we cannot keep our eyes off from one, whom we love. The centurion's humility showed itself in his tender concern for his servant, who was suffering "grievously." As we sink before God in our own estimation, our fellow-men rise in proportion in our hearts; their welfare becomes like our own.

Our lord had far more regard to the faith of the Gentile, well known to him, than he had to the intercession of the elders, when they applied to him; and said in answer to their pleas: "I will come and heal him;" and started immediately towards the house in company with them. When he arrived in its immediate neighborhood, in view from the house; and the soldier saw that our Lord was personally coming; he sent friends who were present in quite a company to sympathize, to meet him and say in his own name: "Lord trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof; wherefore, neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee. But say in a word and my servant shall be healed; for I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers:

and I say unto one go: and he goeth: and to another come: and he cometh: and to my servant do this: and he doeth it."

Whence had he derived so just and discriminating a faith? He may have been personally conversant with the case of the nobleman's son, sick unto death in this very city, who had been healed by our Lord while in Cana of Galilee. That incident certainly revealed the supreme divinity of the Savior in brighter demonstration than his ordinary works; when his word was instantaneously effective at a distance of twenty miles; and the dying boy rose from his couch in the exuberance of rollicking health.

This applicant, surprised by the personal approach of the Savior, hastened to signify his sense of unfitness to receive under his roof the one, whose control even of the subtle powers of nature knows no limit of time or space. Our Savior's condescension oppressed him.

A divine light had guided him in the reading of the Old Testament scriptures, which are exceedingly explicit in this statement of the supreme divinity of the coming Messiah; no one thing pertaining to him being more constantly asserted by descriptions, which admit of no other meaning. The best interpreter is a broken heart sensible of its need of divine teaching, and accepting it with undoubting confidence. The proud soldier had become a little child; and surpassed others in clearness and depth of perception; distinguishing fanciful interpretations from the solid truths of the word. Knowing his appreciation of his visitor, we are not astonished, that he was overcome at the thought, that the majesty of heaven was waiting at his door.

His faith was superior to that of Martha and Mary who said: "Lord, if thou hadst been here, our brother would not have died." It was superior to the faith of the disciples, which proved itself wavering and variable, until after the crowning wonders of their Master's career. It was left for this recent convert from heathenism to penetrate more deeply into the secrets of the mystery of the God-man, than those who enjoyed the privilege of the closest intimacy with him.

This history demonstrates the ample sufficiency of the Old Testament scriptures for all the purposes of our instruction and salvation. They are by no means to be eclipsed by the additional and clearer light of the New. These books, formally read in the synagogue, and the reading was very formal, molded characters, which have become historic.

The services of the synagogue, in one respect, excelled those of the modern church. The time not consumed in prayers was generally occupied in the reading of the word of God, the whole of which historical, prophetic, and devotional was rehearsed every year in the hearing of the worshippers. The addresses made were principally exegetical explanations of the portions read. A child-like faith is competent to derive from these writings all truth, which they were designed to impart. It not only receives the truth: it ignores and rejects what is not revealed, distinguishing the precious from the vile.

Whether the centurion's first conviction of the messiahship of Jesus was derived from the testimony of John the Baptist, who, probably before his arrest and incarceration, preached at the court of Antripas; or from his personal knowledge of the cure of the nobleman's sick son, or from other sources: his faith needed no multiplication of evidences. A single one of the signal works of Jesus was sufficient to certify to him his divinity. Such was the man's decision of character, that sufficient evidence was to him demonstration. He needed no more.

This military leader derived his idea of our Lord's power from a comparison with his own. He was one who possessed authority, and was conscious of command. His personal presence was not necessary to the accomplishment of his will: it was only necessary for him to issue his orders to soldiers or servants. The whole authority of Rome was behind him to enforce compliance with his mandate. He knew what it was to exercise authority, and to be implicitly obeyed.

He conceived Christ as standing at the centre of universal dominion, and wielding the authority of divine com-

mand. The unseen agencies and forces of nature took their orders from him. The limitations which confine men had no application to him. The earth could not hold him without his own consent: for his presence had a connection with the invisible operations by which all things consist. Wherever his bodily presence might be, it was only necessary for him to say the word, go; and disease would go at his bidding. Miracles were as easy to him as the breathing of the word go, or come; or as servants obey the wave of the hand, or any other signal of the pleasure of their Lord however slight: so at the will of Jesus all the powers of the unseen move in obedience. All wait on him for direction: just as in an army, one will, without counsel from without, directs every movement. Our Lord pronounced this statement to be sober truth and actual fact. Our Jesus does stand at the centre of all power: and all agencies existing wait on him for orders. He says go: and they go: come: and they come: do this: and they do it.

But while this officer thus admitted to Christ the empire over all things: he also owned him as the rightful sovereign of his own heart and life, to whom he paid a more than military obedience. Faith not only trusts; it also obeys. Jesus was the leader, whom he acknowledged as the captain of his salvation, the authorized interpreter of the will of God: and was none the worse soldier on that account. He continued in the same calling, in which he had been called: and discharged its duties from a Christian motive. Enlisted in the service of Herod Antipas, he would never be false to his colors, or belie his religious convictions. Receiving Jesus as prophet, he received him also as king.

The announcement of the advent of the long-expected heavenly messenger, who should inaugurate a world wide kingdom of peace and love, had peculiar recommendations to one acquainted with the horrors of war, and heart sick of them. Rome's proud boast of universal empire was far from being realized; but the Nazarene was erecting a kingdom, which promised with certainty to realize the sublime

idea: not an empire of force, but one resting on the loving consent of the governed. He, who could meditate so mighty and novel an undertaking, could be no less than divine. Under him this Roman soldier had enlisted to contend, not with carnal weapons: his arms were truth, love, and prayer. And he had the fullest confidence in his leader, which is the chief requisite of a soldier.

The idea of the union of all nations in one brotherhood, bound together by the tie of loyalty to one supreme ruler, captivated the heart of the Roman, and made him a willing subject. The foundation of this kingdom was to be the Lord Messiah, the βασιλευς, βασις Λαοῦ the foundation of the people. To this King he submitted his heart, and subjected his life. The Savior had not a truer follower, or one who better understood or appreciated him on the earth. With his firm and unflinching attachment to the Nazarene, he could still be loyal to an earthly master, and faithful in the discharge of his trusts: but the horizon of his view was wide: and his heart expanded with the anticipation of an entirely new order of things, under the rule of the Prince of Peace. The men, who hate war the most thoroughly, are often those who have seen the most of it; and those who most heartily approve management by peaceful methods, are such as have had large experience of rule by brute force. When our Lord received the centurion's message through the friends whom he had sent, his progress toward the house was immediately arrested: and he expressed his surprise at the faith of the Gentile. Its clearness of perception, its positiveness of decision, and its spirituality place it above all other recorded in the Gospels.

This man had no common curiosity about the Master or the miracle to gratify; all such feeling was overborne by his greater regard to the invisible, indwelling deity, to be seen by the eye of faith alone. It was doubtless a privilege to be coveted to behold the man Christ Jesus, to hear his voice, to catch the expression of his speaking eye and mobile face, to witness the performance of a miracle. The man he had doubtless seen before in the assemblies of the

synagogue; but vulgar curiosity was lacking in him. We are told that Moses did not dare to look upon the form in the flames of the burning bush, when he had the opportunity. When Abraham was privileged to speak with God in behalf of Sodom and Gomorrha, his words were few; fear held his tongue dumb, except for the briefest intercession. A degree of this same feeling in the Roman stifled all profane curiosity so common to mankind. The object before the mind of the centurion was the God, and not the man. The more his faith is considered, the more the world will marvel. The outward and visible did not so much secure his attention, as the spiritual and invisible. There is no teacher like the Holy Spirit, and no book like the book of God, the first volume as well as the second.

While the Savior was halted at a short distance from the house, he turned to the multitude following, and made this faith the theme of remarks, very briefly reported by the evangelists; after the manner of a man, who has unwittingly come across an unexpected treasure. He pronounced the convictions and expressions of the Gentile to be nearer the truth than anything that had passed from human lips heretofore, among the most highly favored in Israel; above even the testimony of John, the forerunner, or of the virgin mother. He naturally adverted to the future, present to his view, when Gentiles from all parts of the world partakers of the faith of the patriarchs, should sit down with them at the heavenly feast; while the children of these same worthies, lacking their faith, should be cast out.

He described with fearful words the bitter disappointment, and the ungovernable rage of those excluded; words that have a sound of harshness to our ears. But the eyes that wept over Jerusalem were surveying the assembly; the voice, that bewailed with groans their unbelief, was inviting them; and the heart of infinite love was yearning over them: and we are to remember that God is never more kind than when the most faithful warnings are being uttered, and the doom of incorrigible unbelief is being denounced.

We know not to what length this address was prolonged: it undoubtedly emphasized the necessity of like faith to Jew

as well as Gentile. While the master continued speaking, his errand of healing unaccomplished: and the hearers were settling themselves in the posture of attention to words so solemnly affecting every one of them: the centurion, who was in full view, but not within hearing of the voice, left the house, and joined the outermost circle of the audience behind the speaker, eager to catch his words of instruction. No more interested listener was present. The Lord at length turned full upon him: and the two were face to face. "Go thy way," he said, "and as thou hast believed, so shall it be unto thee:" and in this manner shall all real faith in me be rewarded: everything desired and needed by it shall be granted to the uttermost.

At his word, joy shall overflow, and the consolations of the indwelling comforter shall be poured into the wounds which sin has made, till the soul is made perfectly whole. There was demonstration of all this before the eyes of the waiting audience. Our Savior always spoke with the closest application: and the listeners understood that the blessings of salvation were for the Jew first, and also for the Gentile: and that himself could not be more highly gratified and honored than by their personal faith, and their enjoyment of the highest good in the power of God to bestow. They were, however, to be far from thinking that they had a birthright claim to the mercy of God as children of Abraham: or that anything short of a faith like their great progenitor's, could avail for their salvation. Truths enforced by such an object-lesson, could not fail of arousing the most indifferent: nor could they ever be forgotten. Nothing was ever forgotten that the Nazarene had spoken.

After the decisive words to the centurion granting his request, the friends whom he had dispatched as his messengers to the master, left the company, in order that they might ascertain if the young servant were really relieved and restored. They found him rejoicing in the return of vigor and health. The centurion, however, was in no haste to learn the result: he had no doubts to settle: no uncertainty that demanded the verification of examination. He knew from the power accompanying to his own soul the

words spoken to himself, that the patient was restored; nor would he manifest by his conduct the smallest lack of conviction. "He that believeth shall not make haste."

The cure was soon proclaimed to the waiting crowd; and the news was to them all a confirmation of the words of warning, which the great healer had delivered. The sufferer, now in the full tide of health, became a witness; that to Jesus all power in earth and heaven is given, being his by native right. Perhaps also he became a witness to his power to heal the maladies of the soul; the first benefit may have become to him an encouragement to apply for the far greater deliverance from the disease of sin, which more grievously torments the soul than the direst disease does the body.

CHAPTER XII.

THE RAISING OF JAIRUS' DAUGHTER.

Of Jairus we knew nothing except what is recorded in connection with this incident. He was probably a bigoted formalist, and of very positive convictions: only such would ever be elected to the position which he occupied as ruler of the synagogue. These were usually the strictest of their sect; and as a class they looked with little favor on Jesus of Nazareth. We have no reason to think that he would ever have resorted to him, except as impelled by an unavoidable necessity. He had an only daughter of twelve years of age, the flower of the family and the light of the household. We learn from Luke that she was the only child, hence the greater interest felt in her. She had been sick for some time, it is likely or perhaps certain; and no application had been made to the prophet of Nazareth; while any hope of recovery remained. The father was able doubtless to secure the best medical aid which the city afforded; and relied upon it without a thought of seeking relief elsewhere.

It was only when the physicians abandoned their patient, after having exhausted their skill; and informed the sorrowing parents, that nothing more could be done in the case: that they thought of Jesus. He was the very last resort, after all help had failed. From day to day they had watched the ebb of the young life; as it maintained an ever weakening contest with the dire destroyer. The shadow had darkened and deepened steadily; until death was setting his pale seal upon the features, which they loved; and hope and happiness were about to expire with her. As long as any possibility of recovery existed, they continued the struggle against the enemy; but when nothing more could be done, and they sank into utter helplessness under

the impending blow: then and not before they turned to the prophet, who was everywhere spoken against. The application was not the result of loyalty to Christ, or the prompting of a desire to honor him: it was a last resort. This treatment of the Savior is no unusual thing.

No one ever makes a real approach to him, until every other recourse has failed: every hope has been extinguished: every helper has disappointed: and that, on which we have leaned, has become a reed to pierce the shoulder that rested on it. In our sins, we have a natural, instinctive and unaccountable aversion to God's appointed Savior, and seek his aid really, when he remains the only one to whom we can turn. Then we hear for the first time the "glad tidings:" we remember that there is a Savior: and the old, old story salutes our enchanted ears as news from heaven. As we muse on all he said and did, hope revives: the dry bones come together, bone to his bone; flesh covers them above: a gale of heavenly influence sweeps over: and the heath of prayer issues from the lips unsealed: and we arise to a new life.

The determination once formed, he came with speed: and found the one he sought just returning from the other side of the lake. Jesus was never behind his time; but punctual to the occasion ever. He is always ready to the soul that is needy and seeking. Indeed, his errand now was to meet and find the eager comer; and for that purpose he had hurried across. The ruler of the synagogue was one of the first, yes the very first, to meet him as he stepped ashore; and we see in the meeting that his pride was humbled, and his heart overcome and broken. We are told that "he fell at his feet, and besought him greatly" with all the eloquence of agonized sorrow. When a strong man bows himself, and his tongue is loosed in supplication, and he falls on the very ground in agony, he has monopolized the attention of all the bystanders, and every other voice is hushed.

So vivid is the narrative, and the words so exactly reported, that we can almost behold the scene. "My little daughter lieth at the point of death, is even now dead: but come and lay thy hand upon her and she shall live."

Oh how eager he is that Jesus should come at once, before death takes her! How urgent: a few minutes' delay may forfeit the opportunity. Her life hangs upon a moment. Oh let him hasten, before the flickering light goes out forever. He is speaking to one who knows a father's pity for his child, and who is himself moved with a compassion too great for a human heart to hold. The prophet cannot resist the plea, and starts at once in company towards the house; and they are followed by a vast crowd of interested spectators. All depends upon the celerity of their movements. Life or death is in the balance. Women and children were always in every throng that followed Jesus.

Before proceeding far, the leader stops, and with him the accompanying throng. To Jairus a minute's delay seems an age: but Jesus turns and inquires: "Who touched me?" All who stood facing him denied one after another having intentionally or accidentally touched him. "Who touched my clothes?" repeated he. The waiting consumed a little time: and no one confessing, Peter said: "Master the multitude throng thee and press thee: and sayest thou, who touched me?" And Jesus replied: "Some one has touched me: for I perceive that virtue has gone out of me." The shrinking woman, cowering behind the foremost, could not remain concealed: for she discovered plainly that his eyes detected her; and that he knew the whole circumstance and every item of the case. The timidity of her sex and her own native modesty would have restrained any public declaration on her part: but animated by a strange joy, and a consciousness that her death-wound had been healed at the instant of her touch; with a fluttering heart and an irrepressible gratitude, like that of the lame man healed afterwards in the temple by Peter and John who walked and leaped praising God, she threw back her veil, and came forward and fell at his feet.

She recited that from early womanhood she had been subject for twelve years to a wasting consumption, peculiar to her sex, which no remedy had been able to conquer; that though left with a moderate fortune, she had spent all, and had resorted to the most successful physicians in vain: and though she had submitted to the most painful

treatment, her money and her hope were all gone; and she was left with no prospect but of the grave waiting for her; and she felt herself speedily verging to the end. In this state of poverty and despair, she had heard that Jesus was present in the neighborhood; and had determined to apply to him, as one who had never failed in any case however aggravated and hopeless. And she was able to add her testimony to his power: for she knew that she had been instantly healed, and felt the pulses of a new life already beating in vigor and joy. Though the nature of her malady was such as was not suitable to be publicly detailed; that yet her surprise and irrepressible joy enabled her to overcome her shame, and she rejoiced to declare her indebtedness; and was anxious in any way that he should designate, to manifest her gratitude. She was not indebted to the fringe of his garment; but to him who had power over disease and death, and could say to either, go.

Such was the story of the woman, to which there was no more interested listener than the ruler of the synagogue, who possibly knew the person, and recognized the pale and haggard countenance; though not before apprised of the nature of the ailment, which was slowly but surely dragging her to the tomb. He could not have failed to be struck with the similarity of his own case to hers in one respect: that she did not apply to Jesus except as the last resort: after every helper had failed, and hope had been utterly extinguished. He must have been deeply moved by hearing the Master call her "daughter" in terms of undisguised affection; and bid her "be of good cheer, and go in peace, and be whole of her plague" during her whole term of life. There was not one word of upbraiding because she had so long deferred her application: and come to him only in her extremity, when there remained no other helper.

There was instruction to Jairus in the emphasis which Jesus laid upon the woman's faith when he said: "Thy faith hath saved thee." It was not the fringe of the garment, not the touch of the hand, not any medium whatever; but the all-controlling, omniscient power of the mighty personage himself. We do not know whether he had the insight

to perceive that the touch was not essential, while the faith was the condition: he must have suspected the truth at all events.

Just at this instant, while he was busy with these comparisons and reflections, a messenger arrived from his house, and said to him aside in an undertone: "Thy daughter is even now dead: trouble not the master further." Jesus caught the words, though not designed for his ears; and turned full upon Jairus, just as the great agony was convulsing his heart, and said: "Fear not, believe only and she shall be made perfectly whole." There was such command in his tone, such tenderness in his words, and such superhuman confidence and authority in his look, that the pang of bereavement died away, arrested in its very birth; and he found himself believing. Jesus had spoken faith into his soul.

He was no longer in haste. "He that believeth shall not make haste." He was already relieved of a mountain load of sorrow and foreboding; he was surrendering himself to the guidance of the mysterious being, who was directing him by the shepherd-staff of his love; and was beginning to forget all else in contemplating the strange prophet, about whom all, that he had previously heard with so much doubt and scorn, was yet true. It began to seem that the government of all things was on his shoulders; that the laws of nature centred in his will; that the subtle and inscrutable forces of the universe were under his command, and took their orders from his lips. Was this the lord of life and death that was walking at his side? New and strange feelings and thoughts occup'ed his mind; but like the restored blind man he could say: "One thing I know," that whereas I was almost dead with sorrow, now I am at perfect ease: a strange relief has come to my distress; and I am following my leader. He was aware that the restoration of his child depended on his own faith; and this conviction made him cling more closely to him, whom he now felt to be his own future guide and savior.

The distance from the lake to the house had been considerable; and some little time had been consumed in passing. As they arrived, it was evident that it was a

house of mourning. The mourning women had taken possession, and the minstrels whose pitiful strains would draw tears from the driest eyes. Entering Jesus said: "Why make ye this ado? the maid is not dead; but sleepeth." To him it was but sleep. "But they laughed him to scorn: knowing that she was dead."

There is no possibility of mistake in the case of a child. There may be apparent death, or trance, or suspended animation in some instances: these never occur in the case of children. One minute after decease, she was just as dead, as if she had lain in the grave four days or four years. When we sit by the bedside of a dying child, and mark the steady progress of the disease; the barriers which vitality interposes swept away one by one: the strength weakening day by day: the eyes losing their lustre, and expressing more and more the exhaustion of the vital powers: the stupor that indicates fatal congestion coming on with even pace: the life force ebbing away in an unchecked drain: we feel that in the moment of dissolution, we are separated from them by that vast gulf which interposes between the two worlds, the visible and the invisible.

There is no mistaking death: the pallid seal cannot be counterfeited. When they are once gone, they are forever gone. "There is hope of a tree, if it be cut down: that the tender branch thereof shall not cease: but through the scent of water that it will bud and bring forth boughs like a plant: but man dieth and wasteth away" to dust. If a man die, shall *he* live again? "Till the heavens be no more they shall not awake nor arise out of their sleep."

"He put them all out." The scornful crowd were of course excluded: he never gratified vain curiosity: nor suffered inquisitive gazers. Most of his disciples even were excluded. He took only the favored three, with the father and mother, and entered the chamber of death, where upon the bed lay the little corpse.

The tenderness of his conduct surpassed all description. He had ever shown himself a warm lover of children. They everywhere hung around him. We see him twice, as reported by the evangelists, with little children in his arms, and pressed to his bosom. Indeed in all the scenes depict-

ed to us, he never seems greater than when, holding little children to his heart, he blessed them. The only occasion, on which he was much displeased, was when the disciples forbade the mothers, who were bringing their infants for his blessing. It is not said that he was much displeased when insulted, abused and scorned; but he was displeased, when the twelve thought helpless infants unworthy of his attention. His favorite figure, by which he oftenest designated his believing followers was as "children" and "little children." They are the cream of human society, its lovable ones. Wherever he was, the children flocked to him. When he fed the five thousand men in the desert place belonging to the city of Bethsaida; there was also there a large company of women and children. On his last visit to Jerusalem, and after his regal entry, the temple echoed to the cry of children shouting Hosanna to the son of David, regardless of the known feelings of parents and superiors. The simple, unsophisticated children gathered naturally around him, even if the parents turned their back. Some of his mightiest wonders were wrought in behalf of children.

In this case he manifested the warmth of his interest in the young when he approached the bed. He took the little cold hand in his own, and said in low tones, "Talitha cumi;" which is, literally, "little lamb, get up." It is the same word that is used in the Old Testament when it is said: "He shall carry the lambs in his bosom." It was forbidden to touch the dead, contact with whom defiled; but we cannot but be struck with his habit of laying his hands on all who applied to him, not only on the little children, but even on the loathsome leper, and the defiling dead.

We are reminded of a speech of Topsy, in Uncle Tom's Cabin, to the Yankee abolitionist girl, who professed great love for the negroes: "You don't love me; you won't touch me, nor let me touch you." Jesus allowed his disciples to kiss him and embrace him, and the penitent harlot to kiss his feet. Love was the atmosphere in which he moved, and all his commands were comprised in one word, love. His countenance beamed with love as the sun does with light. The tone of his voice was modulated to its music; and

came with calm, subduing influence over all who approached him. It was love that gave him his power; and characterized him with a supreme and unapproachable distinction, above all that ever breathed the air of earth.

When he speaks, the dead hear. The little maid opened her eyes as one awaking from a sweet sleep, and in obedience to the command arose, not with the painful effort of a feeble sufferer, as she had been moving for days, but with the lightness and vigor of perfect health; and walked about the room according to the custom of her happiest times. She was in no humor of returning to her couch; but was up to stay, and ready to engage in her usual avocations of life, whatever they may have been. At the command of Jesus food was brought, which she devoured with the ravenous appetite of robust childhood; neither was she disposed to submit to the enforced confinement that follows recovery. In the highest exaltation of spirits, she was ready for life.

The whole scene from beginning to end was a scene of marvels. The greatest wonder of all was the quiet, serene and infinitely gentle being, whose word had been proved omnipotent. According to the manner of the evangelists a veil is drawn over the ensuing period of surprises, weeping, rejoicing, and overwhelming gratitude, which undoubtedly transported these parents: we are only told that Jesus charged them straitly "to see that no man know it, that they should tell no man what was done." This stern and positive direction put the climax on the whole occurrence; that when their hearts were full to overflowing, they should be forbidden to narrate the particulars to their most intimate associates and friends. The little maiden would be a living and silent witness to his power and mercy, and this was all he wanted; all that the parents could say could add no possible force to the power of this argument. She would stand as long as she lived a monument commemorating the beneficence of the poor foot traveler, who had not where to lay his head on earth.

His works were not the wonder; but himself, so quiet, so unmoved except to mercy, so deaf to applause, so stern in repressing it, who bestowed his mercies for the mercies'

sake. The world is full of idle gossip and street and neighborhood discussions of all social events; it abounds with empty-headed talkers, whose mission in life is like the town bell's; simply to noise abroad the clatter of every common and uncommon event, exhibiting a decided preference for the unsavory and unpleasant. Jesus desired not to be taken upon the lips of such discussion. His command to the parents to say nothing meant simply, let the thing speak for itself. Conceal not the fact; let it have its full influence; but leave every one to form his own conclusions; and let the simple truth produce its natural results. A little reflection will convince anyone of the superhuman wisdom of this direction; and exalt our estimate of the strange teacher, whose discernment is as wonderful as his power is unlimited. There is in this command not a contempt for the world and its opinions, but an immeasurable superiority over them. Everything connected with the Nazarene is in keeping with his high pretensions; and it would not seem strange if Jairus were again fallen at his feet, in actual worship due to God alone; at all events here in the ruler's house had been granted a many sided revelation sufficient to designate the central figure, as the one who was to come, the hope of Israel and of the world, armed with power to heal all its maladies and relieve its sufferings, the conquerer of death, and of all the other consequences of sin.

We may easily credit what the sacred historian says: "Her parents were astonished with a great astonishment." In the accounts in the Old Testament, the restoration of the dead to life is narrated as the supreme effort of the mightiest of the prophets, after long continued prayer and agonized efforts; but Jesus never prayed in order to any of his miracles; (at the grave of Lazarus there was a thanksgiving not a prayer;) he spoke and it was done. It was not so much the miracle as the manner of its performance; without preparation, without means, without process, without fail. Had Jehovah himself from the shechinah performed the miracle, it could not have taken place in any manner more worthy of God. No more was needed to prove his messiahship. The power was resident

in him: he did not act apart from God, but in such concert, that separation was impossible. Such convictions must have forced themselves upon the favored household. He was God. Matchless wisdom was his, as well as power without limit, and a kindness to which the most loving human soul is a stranger, united with an amazing superiority to the world's favor or frown.

The holy word is silent about the results except to inform us, that the fame of this was spread abroad through all that region, notwithstanding the silence of the parties who were witnesses. Jesus still loves the young. Though exalted to heaven, he is unchanged except in glory. The simplicity and sincerity of youth still engage his fondest attachments. We are told by an inspired historian who saw with his own eyes, that a young man who could not yield to the strict requirements made of him, he "looked upon and loved" nevertheless. He loves men in their sins. His loving eye melted Peter in the midst of his denial; he loved his enemies even when they were enemies, and prayed for his murderers in the very height of their cruelty to him, with a prayer that was answered on the day of Pentecost.

Everyone ought to love Jesus; but if any do not, he still loves them without reference to their past or present attitude. If this love had not been in his heart a consuming fire, that waters of sin could not quench, nor floods of ingratitude and opposition drown, he had never come as the Savior of the world. His love was stronger than death and more cruel than the grave; else he had not endured the cross for our redemption. In your sin remember that Jesus weeps and loves you still. Children have their names engraved on the hearts of parents. They stand engraved more deeply on the heart of Jesus Christ. "I love them, that love me and they that seek me early shall find me."

Another thing is clear from this history, that Christ prizes the silent evidence afforded by the lives of his followers above the noisy demonstration of words. It is the bounden duty of his people openly to testify of his goodness and mercy, and to declare his wonderful works; but the power

of our testimony is from what is visible in the life, rather than from the utterances of the lips. Let men so live as to show the reality of their religion, and its dominion over their whole being; and they will better glorify the Master whom they serve, than they can in any other way.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FIRST OUTBREAK OF MURDEROUS ENMITY.

The rulers of the Jewish people seem first to have attempted to induce Jesus to conduct his ministry under their supervision and direction. This is to be inferred from John II: 4. Proposals were probably made to him, to which he did not at all assent, to subject his operations to their counsel and suggestions: in the language of the evangelist, "to commit himself unto them." Nicodemus, in his interview, intimated; that the rulers were disposed to look upon him as a prophet sent of God, convinced by the sight of his miracles. Our Lord's refusal of subjection to their dictation, naturally led them to take a most rigid oversight of all his movements, determined to withhold their approval, unless he punctiliously adhered to the minutiae of their traditions, which it was the business of their body to enforce. A mere prophet could not condescend in his high calling to be directed by human advice: much less he, whose claims were above those of prophets. His proceedings, in his first great work of purifying the temple from the pollutions of the traffic, which Annas had authorized, had not been approved. His attack upon usages, established and supported by the authority of the high priest himself, had made that functionary, with his large connection of relatives, hostile at the very outset. To assail and cut off the perquisites of an office, is generally an unpardonable offence. The greed of gain was at the bottom of the enmity, which the high priest conceived against the new teacher at the commencement of his career.

Failing in their attempt to secure the direction of our Lord's ministry, the religious leaders determined thoroughly to intimidate him, on his first deviation from the observance of the traditions of the elders, which possessed, as they

openly avowed, equal authority with the law of God: and they were not men to flinch from enforcing their convictions.

The Lord was not slow in affording them an opportunity. The 5th chapter of John relates his attendance at Jerusalem at an unnamed feast, probably the Feast of Purim, which occurred a short time before the passover; on purpose to afford them this desired occasion. He was unattended except by John, the narrator of the collision. His journey to the city was rapid, his stay short, and his return immediate. His object was to exhibit and enforce his high claims of Sonship to the Almighty Jehovah.

On the Sabbath day he visited the pool of Bethesda, in whose porches were congregated a great multitude of impotent folk, waiting for the moving of the water, which an angel at certain seasons troubled. Transcribers have, from the earliest times, endeavored to eliminate the angel from the account: which they cannot do without destroying the history itself.

Nature in her different departments exhibited signs of the presence of the promised seed, as the sky showed the prophetic star. Old Bethesda likewise felt a miracle in its waters, dating back possibly to the time of the birth. As our Lord walked through the porches, he selected as the object of his aid an old man, as being the most helpless, hopeless and unworthy of the sufferers; for his condition appears to have been the result of vice. He was already the prey of despair. Standing before him in such a way as to attract his undivided attention, our Lord accosted him with the question, which from any other lips would have been a mockery: "Wilt thou be made whole?" But in the questioner there appeared a sympathy, which forbade all suspicion of trifling. The poor man went on at length to state his weakness; and that he was perishing in full view of the remedy, for want of a helper to assist him into the water; evidently hoping to secure help from the compassionate stranger.

But to his astonishment, Jesus, transformed for a moment, by a flash of divine grace and power glowing through the mask of his humanity, revealing his conscious suprem-

acy over the powers of evil, said with an authority more than mortal: "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." The magnetism of the look, the power in the words were such, that the impotent sufferer could but obey. He arose, took up the rug or oriental mat, on which he lay, and walked away, restored to the full vigor of his youth. In this there was not the slightest breach of the Sabbath; but it was a violation of their traditions. These forbade the wearing on the Sabbath day of a sandal with a double sole, as it was the bearing of a burden. Such absurd regulations had in their view an authority equal to that of the divine law: Jesus was contending for liberty and right against the tyranny of an odious superstition.

Before the crowd assembled, which was sure to gather when the cure once became known, our Lord quietly slipped away. Had he commanded the Sabbath to be really broken, as the priests in the temple were required to break it by servile work on every returning holy day, he, as its institutor and Lord, had the right. Had not Israel been commanded to compass Jericho seven times on the seventh day? It was not the violation of the day that angered the religious leaders; it was the notable miracle that displeased them; as it demonstrated that the Son of Man was lord also of the Sabbath day. In the past history of the nation, miracles had been wrought on the holy day: certainly the falling of the walls of Jericho. The opposition of these enemies was as rancorous, when healings were effected by the laying on of hands simply, or by a spoken word. The miracles angered them.

They were hard pushed for a charge against the Nazarene, when after diligent search, they could trump up nothing more plausible than this. The ring of malice is in their question to the man, "who is he that commanded thee to take up thy bed?" and not, who is he, that made thee whole by a word? At first we are aggrieved to learn how ready he was to inform against his benefactor; until we remember that Jesus wished the necessary conflict to be inaugurated at once. He came to send fire on the earth; and "what will I if it be already kindled?"

It is evident that our Lord's defense recorded in this ch. v. John. was made before the Sanhedrin, the body which had sent the messengers to inquire of John the Baptist the meaning of his mission. Not that our Lord was arrested; or that hands were laid on him; or that he was held in custody: but that he was summoned by the proper officers through a process of law, to appear before the council at a set time, and answer to the charge of Sabbath breaking. Of course he was willingly obedient to the summons.

Appearing before that august body, he offered his first defense in a single sentence; but these few words stung the hearers to madness. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" on the Sabbath. God on the holy day upholds all things; maintains the orderly progress of the universe as on other days. He makes the sun to rise, the earth to revolve, the rivers to flow, the grass and herbs to grow, and all the machinery of nature to run as usual. On the Sabbath, the angel stirs the waters of Bethesda, for which troubling the multitude of impotent folk were waiting on the day in question; and God heals and restores him who steps into the waters, just as on other days of the week: "and I work." In one breath he puts himself into a full equality with the Father, being his son in a sense not true of man or angel; makes the eternal Father his only associate and equal; and claims all that is conceded to the everlasting Father as his due.

An ordinary transgressor of the Sabbath law, they would never have punished with death; however severely they might have dealt with him: that they should be bent on putting Jesus to death for such an offence, is unaccountable. About their hatred of him there rests an inexplicable mystery. But now the charge of violating the Sabbath became secondary: their indictment was amended, and a new count added, for which "they sought the more to put him to death," namely for his astounding pretensions; which he justified in a speech surpassing, in lofty sublimity, and irresistible force, anything that ever fell from human lips. It stunned and paralyzed the listening senate, with an astonishment such, that they feared to lay hands upon him: however much they hated him.

Undeniable truth invested him as a robe, like the uncreated light around the throne of God. Everything connected with him, his pure and spotless life, his untainted soul, his mighty works, his divine wisdom, his unaffected majesty of mien all agreed with his high pretensions; and confirmed them. This first collision with him made them his everlasting enemies. It were easier to turn the sun from its course than him. His position was unmistakable; and to contend against it was to fight against the obvious facts of the case. Instead of yielding assent, they felt their purpose strengthened to put him to death; a purpose in which they faltered not until they had him safe in the tomb of Joseph.

The offensive points in this defense regarded his own person. He associated himself with the Father as his only companion and equal. "He was with God." "Whatever things the Father doeth these also doeth the son likewise." The union of the Father and the son is a love union; they are united by an affection necessary to their nature above the experience and conception of creatures. The father will show him greater things than these miracles of healing; "for as the father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the son quickeneth whom he will." There is one thing that the father had committed wholly to the son, the judgment of men, "because he is a son of man; that all men should honor the son even as they honor the father; he that honoreth not the son honoreth not the father, which hath sent him." After interjecting an announcement of the gospel condition of salvation, for the benefit of his would be murderers, he resumes his own vindication. "Verily, verily I say unto you the hour is coming and now is; when the dead shall hear the voice of the son of man, and they that hear shall live." The raising of the young man of Naim to life, and also of the daughter of Jairus soon after, were the fulfilment of this statement. God is the fountain of life; and hath given to the son in his humiliation to be also himself a similar fountain of life.

"Marvel not at this," the restoring to life of a few; "for the hour is coming when all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done

good, to the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation." Life is in the Son's approval; damnation is in his frown. He goes on to emphasize his subordination to the Father; but not his inferiority. "I can of mine own self do nothing." He cannot act separately from the Father; the two act always in concert; as our two eyes are one organ; and neither independent of the other. His testimony is true, because he seeks not his own will; but the will of the Father who has sent him. He that bears witness of himself is not a true messenger; another bears witness of Jesus, whose testimony is eternal truth; not John; for our Lord "does not receive testimony from man."

No man or angel is old enough or competent to testify to him, who is the Father of eternity. He stoops immeasurably to receive the attestation of men or angels. There is one and one only, who can really bear witness respecting him; the Father himself. But out of burning love to their souls, he cites them to John, whose testimony he admits under protest as it were. How must the Sanhedrin have been startled at such words! An earthquake must have shaken their souls. Who is this who cannot stoop to receive the testimony of prophets or of angels? who will allow no witness as sufficient to the dread occasion, lower than the eternal Father himself? The wildest gleam of insanity never framed words or thoughts as wild; but they were calmly uttered in the ears of the Jewish council by the only sinless being that ever stood on this earth, all whose belongings affirmed his words, and sanctioned his claims in full.

How is the testimony of the Father expressed? Our Savior represents it as given in three ways: By the works given him to do; by the audible voice at his baptism; and by the Scriptures. And first by the works. How modestly he speaks of them; not calling them mighty works or wonders as men speak of them. They are simply the works which the Father had given him to do. While they astounded the world, they were to him no more than the common operations of nature. A miracle is the touch of omnipotence upon the laws of nature, controlling them,

and changing their operation for a time; and is the signature of God himself to the credentials of a prophet, designating him by divine authority. This method of verification is of God's own ordaining.

Jesus was thus shown to be "a teacher come from God." His works were all works of aid to suffering humanity; restorations from the effects of sin; healing the wounds which sin has made. Works of any other kind he persistently declined to perform. If in answer to their oft repeated demands, he had shown them a sign from heaven; and had wrought wonders calculated to encourage the worldly aspirations of the people, he could have secured his own unanimous reception by the truly oppressed nation, in the certain hope of temporal deliverance from the Roman power. They would, if possible, have taken him by force, and made him a king; and precipitated their dire conflict with Rome; but in his wiser method, they were left to form their judgment of him, without the expectation of immediate worldly benefit; receiving or rejecting him solely on his merits.

With far less evidence from attendant miracles, the nation had received and acknowledged the ancient prophets: the works of Jesus had eclipsed all in their past history; "it had never been so seen in Israel." While they were multiplied beyond numbering; they were wrought in a manner proving much more, than that Jesus was "a teacher come from God." It was not so much the works, as the wonderful being who effected them. The mighty power that accomplished them resided in him: of the wonderful wisdom shining through his teachings, himself was the wonderful fountain. While the miracles of Moses and Elijah proved them to be heaven-sent messengers: those of Jesus demonstrated him to be the Son of God. All the powers of nature centered in him, and took orders from him; the world of the living, as well as death and the grave, were subject to him; no effort was needed for him to walk the sea or ascend the sky; miracles cost him but the breath that commanded them. All attested his divinity. He knew how to

temper his operations in such wisdom; as did not arouse their fanaticism; and did not attract them by the hope of worldly deliverance.

He refers next to the Father's testimony by the audible voice at the Jordan. He says: "Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape:" implying possibly that there were those, who had heard the voice, and seen the descending shape. No more convincing attestation can be imagined than the voice from heaven, declaring in distinct utterance: "Thou art my beloved son: in thee I am well pleased." This voice had never been heard since the terrible day, when from the summit of Sinai it shook the earth. No other occasion had since offered of sufficient importance to justify the calling of the great Jehovah from the heights of infinite glory. Now it announced a truth surpassing in magnitude and weight all truth beside. Heaven has often sent communications by messengers duly authorized: this case demanded words from God himself: not that Jesus needed this encouragement: "This voice came not because of me; but for your sakes." Not only the voice; but the beam of heavenly light, and the mysterious dove; signifying that he is the one, who shall baptize with the Holy Ghost and fire. Fire is a cruel ordeal; but it separates the dross: it is the great purifier. "It shall try every man's work of what sort it is." It shall consume the wood, hay, and stubble, and leave the indestructible as gold tried in the fire.

The third form, in which the testimony of the Father is communicated, is through the Holy Scriptures. These Old Testament scriptures contain a perfect delineation of the coming one; of the time and place of his nativity: of his family descent; of the appearance which he shall make to the eyes of men; of the ministry, which he shall accomplish; the works which he shall perform; of the treatment which he shall receive at the hands of his own people; and of the sufferings which he shall undergo. All is written as with a sunbeam. The clearest photograph, from the hand of the artist, is not a more distinct description of the subject; than is the prophetic picture of the coming Savior, a veritable delineation of Jesus of Nazareth.

When it is remembered how readily and lovingly God affords his aid to the bewildered understanding, on the first breathing of desire for his guidance; the mistake of the Jews appears wonderfully criminal. The Ethiopian Eunuch shall be delivered from his doubts into the noon-day light; if a miracle is demanded to accomplish the conversion. "Search the scriptures" as the miner searches the gold-bearing sands for the precious metal; or follows the lead upon the surface of the ground, into the very bowels of the earth in pursuit of it. The thought that the human mind is susceptible of such dire mistake, about a matter of so vital importance, is not pleasant: but such errors are possible about one subject only: the subject of religion.

Jesus was no impostor. No man could sustain for a single hour the role of such an imposture. The first utterance of a claim to divinity would stamp its author as hopelessly insane. To be the Son of God is to be absolutely sinless, and incapable of sin; it is to be endued with absolute perfection; to be possessed of the uncreated attributes. No mere man can advance such claims; because the assumed character could not be supported for a moment. The most extravagant lunatic never conceived an idea so wild. Had he spoken it; he would by the word have been placed below contempt.

But in Jesus of Nazareth, everything agreed with the high pretension, and confirmed it. The sun has spots; but he was a sun without a spot: every diamond has its flaw; he was a gem without a flaw. His countenance was luminous with wisdom; his eyes shone with purity; the infinite and eternal love dwelt in him as in its earthly tabernacle. When he stood before Pilate, oppressed with nameless insult, and declared "I am a King;" the Roman felt anything but contempt for him: for in him, he beheld a majesty more imperial than Caesar's; a purity, whose eyes could not be downcast by insult and scorn; a kindness that could not be angered. He did not profess to be the Son of God; he *was* the Son of God. His humanity was but the ground glass globe, enclosing and mellowing the inward light of the divinity. And though humiliated to

the lowest poverty, and rejected with all the venomous rancor of sin, and set at nought, and crucified and slain; his glory could not be dimmed or tarnished.

What was the effect of this defense upon the council? The assembly were lost in amazement at the lofty tone of the speaker; and completely dumbfounded before him. A wave of surprise struck the senate, before which it was for a time impossible to move. Astonishment prevented action. One thing was evident to them, it was impossible to deal with the Nazarene except upon his own terms. No restraint or compromise was practicable. His defense was his crime; and their purpose was confirmed to show him that he should die like a man; that their disapproval of his claims should be by his death as a criminal.

Thus they sat disarmed for a time by blank amazement; while their prisoner coolly departed, uncondemned; but having accomplished his purpose of bringing before the magnates of his nation, the great fact; that the crisis of the world's destiny had rolled in, and the promised seed, "the desire of all nations" had appeared. The fact that his enemies did not, at his examination before Caiaphas, bring against him the charge of violating the Sabbath, is proof: that they themselves felt that it did not lie.

From this time forth the history informs us that whenever at Jerusalem, he expressed his consciousness of full equality with the Father, there was at once an incipient tumult. The evangelist John relates the origin and the steady growth of the nation's dislike, and hatred of the Nazarene; narrating only those miracles which became stumbling stones to the people, aggravating more and more their opposition. Often we read: "they would have laid hands on him," "no man laid hands upon him, because," "some would have laid hands on him," and at another time "they understood not, that he spoke to them of the Father" as an explanation of the lack of tumult. The crowd evidently surged upon him often to use violence upon his person; but under the protection of heaven, his life was inviolable until his hour had come. The rage of his enemies grew with time; till at the last not a voice was raised against the greatest outrage ever perpetrated on this earth.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CURE OF THE PARALYTIC IN CAPERNAUM.

The evangelists inform us that most of the mighty works of Jesus were wrought in Capernaum, Chorazin and Bethsaida: in the former city principally, which was for a considerable period the home and headquarters, to which he returned from the preaching tours which he made through Galilee. Here assembled from different points the sick and afflicted, awaiting his return from the excursions referred to. And among the citizens of this place many of his most glorious miracles occurred, though five only are recounted with particularity of detail, viz: The raising of the little daughter of Jairus from the dead: the healing of the centurion's servant, notable for the kind predictions of favor to the Gentiles by which it was accompanied: the raising up of Peter's wife's mother from the bed of sickness, where she lay prostrated by a "great" *i. e.* fatal fever, as Luke, the physician, relates; the restoration in the synagogue of the man possessed, being the first instance of his resistless control over spirits from the other world; and the cure of the paralytic, the theme of the present consideration. These were only a small fraction of the works effected in these places, which may have been nearly contiguous, along the slopes of the northwestern shores of the sea of Galilee; and in such close proximity as to form an almost continuous population, skirting the lake upon its northern limit.

It is a remarkable fact that he was rejected first in the places where most of his mighty works had been effected. The cure of the paralytic in Capernaum merits special consideration; because of its vital importance, which led each of the synoptists to include it in his narrative. The people had at this time seen enough of his miracles to understand, that diseases of all kinds and devils obeyed his

word: and consequently he was followed by crowds passing enumeration. A farther and more startling revelation was to be made on the present occasion. He had unexpectedly returned to Capernaum: and it was noised, that he was in the house where he usually tarried, probably Peter's. A large company of eminent Pharisees and doctors of the law, who had been waiting for such an opportunity, came together at once, and were seated in the places of honor within the house, and in the interior porches, the houses being built around a yard, upon which opened all the doors and windows of the building, and having interior porches surrounding the yard. On one of these porches our Lord was sitting, when this history begins, in his wonted occupation of speaking to those so suddenly collected.

Though the subject of his address is not mentioned, it is easy to divine, that it was the forgiveness of sins, the necessity, and the greatness of the blessing which God alone can bestow. Every spot within, that afforded sitting or standing room was occupied by the continually increasing crowd, until the door itself could not be approached by the most energetic shouldering. The multitudes that followed Jesus, or instantly assembled wherever he taught, surpassed all gatherings that had ever been known for the number of persons, and for the unyielding compactness with which they were wedged about him. No one would surrender his place to another; and not even the entreaties of the mother of Jesus on one occasion could open a passage through the mass: and they were sometimes so tightly packed that it was possible for a man to walk upon the sea of heads as upon a solid floor.

Not only did curiosity to see the mighty miracle worker attract, but the hearts of the people were being stirred by national hopes and ambitions which the presence of an accredited Messiah excited. None ever stood on earth who could attract such engrossing attention, or rouse so intense commotion of soul. Eyes gazed on him as they have never gazed since or before; and ears listened as they would listen to a voice from the spirit world. Never were the souls of men so absorbed in the decision of vital questions.

It is not matter of wonder that a crowd gathered instantly, wherever it was known that he might be. His appearance, differing so from ordinary humanity, the wisdom of his speech deeper than Solomon's, the tones of his voice expressive of the divinest emotions, charmed them into a forgetfulness of hunger or fatigue. And then the greatest crisis of history had arrived: and the air was thick with doom, and burdened with the premonition of some impending revolution.

The undertaking of four men to penetrate the jam at the house was preposterous; but the attempt was made. Appeals were doubtless made to the humanity of the bystanders, in behalf of a well known citizen: arguments were drawn from the opportunity to be afforded to test the powers of the great teacher, and the probability of beholding a miracle; but appeals and arguments were useless: a dogged resistance was offered to all approach. There was doubtless sympathy for the sufferer, and also desire to behold a miracle wrought; but there was a stronger determination not to lose an inch of distance from the one centre toward which all were pressing, or one word of the discourse. The poor sufferer seemed doomed to fail of relief, notwithstanding the nearness of the helper.

The paralysis under which he was suffering, is a disease which strikes its blow at the very centre and foundation of our life. The victim may live for a time; but life is but a living death. The vital powers are being fast exhausted. While this subject was thus helpless in body; his soul was in a condition of equal or greater depression. A correct opinion of his state of mind can be formed from the words afterwards addressed to him by the Savior, whose speech was always to the point, and suited exactly to the condition of those addressed: and from his words it is plain that he was languishing under the conviction of unforgiven sin. The angel of death had been breathing in his face; and the dread prospect of the future had brought his sins to remembrance. His soul was paralyzed as well by foreboding and despair.

Of all the sorrows known on earth, nothing is more wearing and life-destroying than conviction of sin, and the at-

tendant remorse. When death comes to the couch of sickness, and hell follows after, the shaken dart is poisoned with the sting of retribution, and the sorrows of time seem light and unworthy of attention, compared with the deeper agony, which seizes the spirit, more killing than all the ills of life united can inflict. No more pitiable object can be found than the man, who is facing the retributions of the future, with the full knowledge of his guilt unatoned and unforgiven. Such was the sufferer of that memorable day; and well was it for him, that his friends, sympathizing with his unutterable anguish of soul, were determined to carry out their attempt to reach the great healer to a certain success. Our Savior applauds the faith of the bearers especially.

Some one of them in the full tide of a vigorous faith, suggested that they try the roof, ascent to which was still practicable. Those succeed in gaining spiritual blessings, whom no obstacles can overcome or difficulties deter. The outside stairs leading to the roof were still unoccupied; and the four friends hastened to ascend them, and to cross the roof to the porch immediately above where Jesus was sitting. The roof of those times was solidly constructed, and was used for sitting, promenading and sleeping; but the inner porch, in which the master was sitting, seems to have been covered with courses of tiles, making it water-tight; but having no inner lining under the tiles. The taking up of enough of these to allow the passage of the bed between the adjacent rafters, was all that was required to afford them access to the one they sought. Having made all the necessary preparations before the ascent, by ropes properly attached, they let the helpless invalid down into the midst where the Savior was sitting, and immediately before him.

The sight of him in his helpless condition was a sufficient appeal, were no word of supplication uttered. This act of theirs was by no means resented by the master as an intrusion, or regarded as an interruption; but was most cordially welcomed as a self-offered opportunity of dispensing blessings, and affording an illustration of the subject of which he was speaking. He at once hastened be-

fore a request had been made, to greet the sufferer with the greatest boon, that God can bestow or man receive: "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee." The soul demanded the Savior's first attention; as its condition of conviction; of felt need, and utter despair was the chief misery of the man; and relief of his spiritual wants his chief desire.

Sin is a paralysis of the soul, a disease striking at the very centre and root of the spiritual life. The paralyzed body may be perfect in all its parts, possessing all the muscles and tendons of vigorous manhood; but it has lost all power to use them. It lives but that is all; it is but a helpless lump. Sin has in like manner destroyed all our strength morally. Paralysis is also a failure of sensibility. The living flesh has lost its feeling, and hardly notices puncture or laceration. What better description of our moral condition can be given? The fatal palsy of sin has impaired the moral sensitiveness of the soul. Obligations which are confessed are not suitably felt; mercies, of whose magnitude all are intellectually convinced, are not appreciated; gratitude is not exercised, though it is acknowledged to be due. The duty which men owe to God to love and serve him is better founded than any other obligation, more imperative, more urgent; why is it not felt and rendered;? Sin has palsied the soul, until it does not feel, and has no strength to act. Why do not christians trust always with a victorious faith? Why do they not always rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory? They are under the palsy of sin.

The pining of this poor invalid for some evidence, that sin was forgiven, was more fervent than his desire to be delivered from his disease; and our Lord hailed him with the most comforting assurance, that his prayer was answered. He did not pronounce his sins forgiven: *he forgave them*: he did it by his own judicial decision, not as a messenger of peace from a higher court; but as exercising a divine prerogative. He did it by the same authority by which he controlled disease and death.

That the forgiveness was effective, and that it really removed the burden of guilt from this disconsolate mourner,

was evident to all who had the opportunity of observing him. The manifest signs of the new birth are unmistakable, and fasten the intense gaze of every beholder. The child-like humility, the joy that cannot be expressed, the holy trust, paint themselves in living colors upon the features; and may be discerned, were verbal expression impossible. In another instance it is said that "they in the council beheld the countenance of Stephen as of an angel." So in this case the light of a new life shone at once in the eyes, and illuminated the face of clay with a celestial glory.

When Jesus said to him: "thy sins are forgiven thee," the weight of condemnation was at once lifted from his heart; and the hope and courage of the new life began to beat in the pulses of his soul. Heaven had come down to him on earth; and Jesus of Nazareth was the sun, whose beams enlightened the world of glory. His soul was stilled into the deepest submission: he was now willing to endure his bodily affliction, even were it life-long. His desire was to do and suffer the whole will of God. This submission is the very essence of heaven. No angel in the skies realizes a fuller, deeper joy, than the soul that sinks into the hands of God without a wish of its own, laying itself upon the altar of fire as a whole burnt offering. A revelation always accompanies the pardon of sin, which transforms the recipient, and makes him a partaker with the saints in glory.

How ready Jesus is to forgive sin appears from this history. How he loves, how he welcomes the returning prodigal, how he rejoices over him with singing! The sinner saved rejoices with a joy unspeakable and full of glory; but the mighty Saviour feels a mere intense, a nobler joy. The boundless, infinite happiness of Jehovah arises from his indulgence of mercy. Judgment is his strange work; but mercy is his delight. When Moses prayed to behold the glory of God, the Lord caused all his goodness to pass before him; and the crown of the whole was, "forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin."

The value and preciousness of this forgiveness will be realized, when it is considered, that it is a legal release recorded in the court of heaven, from all the claims of the divine

law against a man for past transgressions. When the law of God relaxes its condemnation for past sins, a strange peace of conscience ensues, like the quiet which followed upon the sea of Galilee, when the winds were laid in an instant by the word of Christ, and the sea ceased its raging, and there was a great calm. Such is the calm of the forgiven soul.

Jesus forgives with the full knowledge of all the hidden evils of the heart unsuspected by ourselves. The present account exhibits him as reading the bottom thoughts of those about him, as one reads a book. "Man looketh upon the outward appearance; but the Lord looketh upon the heart." The heart which should be the best part of man is the worst, far worse than the outward life. Its rebellions and murmurings and hatred of God and man are studiously concealed, to avoid intolerable shame. Indeed a man is a stranger to his own heart: until the holy light shines in, and reveals its horrors. When he at length sees his own true inwardness, he generally despairs of pardon altogether: but Jesus knowing all yet forgives; and his pardon is irreversible. What is loosed on earth is loosed in heaven; and "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." His decree of absolution is never recalled.

The Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by were shocked by the words spoken by our Lord. In them he was not only arrogating a divine holiness and superiority to evil more strongly than could be asserted in words; but he was exercising the prerogative belonging to God alone of loosing that which God himself had bound. Their minds were full of the charge of blasphemy. Jesus did not wait for them to utter their thoughts, or consult each other's judgment: but at once answered the unspoken accusation by an appeal to the Most High, whose rights had been invaded as the objectors imagined. It was saying in effect: let God, for whose honor you are so zealous, decide.

The question, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" contained an unquestionable truth. It belongs to God alone to forgive, as it is his to punish. In all human governments, the pardoning power is vested in the highest exec-

utive officer. Being of the gravest import, it requires to be exercised with the wisest discretion; lest it be attended with the most eminent injury to the state. Of all trusts committed to officials, none should be more jealously guarded, or used with nicer judgement. The proper administration of justice requires, that all possible safeguards should be thrown around every process of law. In the government of God the issuing of a pardon for offences committed is an exercise of the supremest prerogative, which the Most High guards with a jealousy of supervision that suffers no violation. Who can forgive sins but God alone? Who can reverse the sentence of Jehovah himself from the court above?

Jesus appealed to heaven to sustain his declaration of absolution of this penitent; and staked the issue between himself and the doctors of the law upon the result. Let God decide by miracle whether the Nazarene possessed the power to pardon and restore the soul to the divine favor. Accordingly he said to the languishing cripple: "That ye may know that the son of man hath power to forgive sins: I say unto thee, arise and take up thy bed, and go unto thy house." Thereby let all men know by the decision of God himself, my right and authority to forgive.

To the amazement of the assembly, the weak and powerless paralytic arose with the agility of health, took up his bed, and swinging it with all the ease of full strength, departed with firm, unflinching step; the dense crowd opening before him. His joy could not be contained, and he broke out into loud praises, glorifying God for the priceless favor bestowed. If he emulated in his demonstration the lame man afterwards healed by Peter and John, none could be heartless enough to condemn him. As he passed, the teacher may have said: just as his body has received strength instantaneously at my word: so had his inner-man in like manner been relieved from the burden of guilt before. A new physical life has come to him: a new spiritual life had already been infused into the soul at my word. The Father's testimony "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased," was given as distinctly as it had been proclaimed at the Jordan.

Our Lord gave them to understand further, that all depended upon the word that he might please to speak: "Whether is it easier to say, thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, arise and walk." Did it require an unbounded exertion on the part of God to create all things, an inconceivably potent conatus? It required only just as much effort as the pronouncing of the words, let there be light, let the sea bring forth, let the land bring forth. God calls things that are not, and they are. All depends upon the word he may please to utter. The same is true of the Son: his word is sufficient to take away sin; though this be a far greater work than creating worlds. Bringing order into the sin-disturbed soul, removing the stains of guilt, and restoring the throne of the affections to the God whose it is of right, is a greater accomplishment than bringing dead matter into existence, however grand and glorious the spheres of light may be, moving in their sublime and almost measureless circuits. Jesus accomplishes impossibilities by a word: there is omnipotence in his lightest command: he is competent to the great work of renewing and saving the guilty soul.

Vain is the attempt to imagine a statement more astonishing, more crushing, more divine. The greatness of the claim seems to have overwhelmed the objectors. Upon the assembly there rested the awe of a mysterious presence, before which all things bowed, that are in heaven and on the earth, and under the earth. The evident truth of all the claims of the Nazarene was before the eyes of the assembly, and was undeniable. Had there been lack of the fullest evidence, there were present those, who would have risen against him on the spot; but every mouth was shut; their breath was taken away; and there was not a word of disapproval. An involuntary fear paralyzed the assembly; a "great fear" fell upon them. He who wielded such powers to bless, possessed equal power to destroy. By a general conviction, they trembled before him. Just as the mighty works of God in nature, the destroying wind, or earthquake flash upon men a sense of their dependence and accountability; so the impressions of that day were profound and not soon forgotten. The healing

of the poor cripple was the smallest circumstance: it was the words of the mysterious teacher, the doctrine, the demonstration. Yet how slow is the human mind in receiving the truth respecting Jesus! It is said further: The people "glorified God, which had given such power unto *men!*" How the heart is closed against the admission of the divinity of Jesus!

Their fellow-townsmen remained among them, a living example of a new and changed life, full of spiritual aspirations, and endeavors after new obedience: quite in contrast with his former course, which may have been totally different. A witness of the power and mercy as well as the high pretensions of the humble Nazarene remained with them. All felt his entire unlikeness to all that had been seen in the past: that he could not be numbered with prophets; nor his works be classed with any that had been seen in Israel. The clear demonstration of his divinity dawned very gradually, and gently upon his disciples; and it was only after multiplied evidences and unquestionable proof, that they acknowledged him to be the son of God: and then the full significance of the designation was evidently not taken in by them until they had seen him ascend. As for the multitude, impressions, however deep and solemn at the time, are evanescent: but they had heard the claims of the Nazarene stated with a demonstration that defied contradiction, and shut the mouth of opposition.

CHAPTER XV.

THE DEMONIAK OF GADARA.

On this particular day, our Lord spent the whole forenoon in teaching large crowds on the western shore of the lake: until he was quite overcome with fatigue, and his physical frame demanded immediate relief. A sudden order was given to cross the lake: and he was taken "as he was" into the ship without delay for procuring provisions, or means of repose. The calumny had already found utterance: that he had an unclean spirit, and was in league with Beelzebub. While the reality of his miracles was not denied, many were still unconvinced by them: because they were wrought with no display of visible omnipotence.

Such demanded a sign from heaven that could be seen: and God was about to grant it. He, that holds the winds in his fist, and manages the seas, was present in the person of the Nazarene.

The disciples were surprised in mid-passage by a storm, which caught them with sails set and hatches open. The only possible recourse of the mariner in that land-locked sea, was immediately to head his ship to the wind, and lash the helm to the starboard, and lay the ship to. Failing in this, they were in imminent peril. Their appeal to the Master "we perish" was no exaggeration: wreck upon the shore was certain, and that soon. He arose: and while they expected him in some way to bring the ship to, and lay its nose to the wind, they were lost in unbounded amazement to hear him speak to the wind: and it hushed instantly. The jerking of the sea, when the wind is completely lulled, is more straining to the vessel, than the storm itself. He issued his word to the sea: and it fell into the smoothness of a calm.

The hush of the storm at his word was at once a sign from the sky, and an indication of his true personality; for it brought the inquiry to every lip. "Who is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" He is no underling of Satan; but Lord of the realm of nature. Quite a little fleet had followed the parting ship; and oppressed as the Master was with hunger and fatigue, he sank at once into a profound slumber. How weak was his humanity, so utterly overpowered as to be unable to keep the eyes open; what calmness of repose as he lay seemingly unconscious, when the storm came on, and the wind tossed his locks, and whipped his robes about his limbs! and after he was awakened and stood up on his feet what serene assurance of command! "What a word is this?" so calm, so omnipotent! Nothing so sublime as this scene upon the lake was ever conceived: the life-like story carries in itself evidence of its truth. Here was the blending of human weakness and eternal might.

The disciples were properly reproved for their want of faith. They as well as the multitude, had need of entertaining a higher estimate of the Master, than it had entered into their hearts to conceive. If he commanded them to go to the other side; they could no more go to the bottom, than they could go to the stars. His command always carries with it a promise of aid in the performance of what is required.

When the ship came to shore, it was at the landing of the city of Gadara, which was yet some miles inland, and toward which our Lord took his way. The miracle which occurred on the route seems to have been wrought for the purpose of demonstrating the reality of demoniacal possession; that it was more than ordinary lunacy; and that there could be no confederacy between Jesus and those denizens of the pit: the sole object of the one being destruction and misery, of the other, the deliverance of men from suffering and from sin. The patients in this case were undoubtedly insane; and being in this condition without the power of resistance, they had become the lawful prey of the evil powers. Unlike ordinary lunatics, who are inca-

pable of conspiracy, they herded together and formed a partnership in mischief, as they were partners in misfortune.

Matthew with his usual exactness in numbers, is the only one who informs us of the two. One was so inferior in ferocity and strength as to be hardly noticed; yet he sought his partner's horrid society, and emulated him in the achievement of their dreadful undertakings. The description by the sacred writers surpasses in melancholy interest anything occurring in our days. Our asylums can by no means parallel the case; nor in the history of dementia through the ages can its like be found.

1. In the first place this man was an instance of superlative misery. No condition can be conceived more dreadful than to be identified with the spirits, who are the prey of everlasting despair; to whom hope is a stranger and joy unknown; and to be ruled by their malicious instincts of envy of all seeming happiness that exists. They drove him to the tombs: not empty as we find them now, and pervaded by the pure atmosphere of to-day; but foul with decaying remains in all stages of decomposition. Superstition kept visitors aloof; and passers by in the night hurried their steps: and felt a panic at any noise issuing in the neighborhood. Those receptacles of the dead suited the gloom and loneliness of the poor maniac, as they did of the foul spirits who made him the sport of their caprices. A horror darker than the rayless midnight, and a misery beyond relief imparted their tinge to all the experience of these poor victims. No song of joy, or shout of exultation, or cry of satisfaction was ever heard from them: but only howls of rage, and cries so dismal, that they might have issued from the world of woe.

Sleep was a stranger to their eyes; and when all the world was locked in repose, oft in the stilly night there sounded out a prolonged yell, that carried in its tone such unearthly anguish and horror: that those who heard it, remembered it in the morning as a horrid dream, and sometimes found sleep impossible for hours afterwards. These were but the utterance of the malignity and misery in which they lived. At the same time these poor men were

but puppets in the hands of possessing demons, and mouth-pieces expressing the passions of those, whom God has cast off. The howl of the wolf, the cry of the panther, and even the roar of the lion, heard in the dead of night, had not a note so demoralizing: nor could produce an equal sensation.

2. This man was untameable. He had been bound with manacles at the wrist, and fetters at the ankle: and such was his unnatural strength, that bands of iron could not hold him. The manacles had been torn asunder, the links severed by his inordinate energy; and the fetters had been thrashed to pieces by stamping and kicking. Again had the trial been made to confine him by yet stronger bands of doubled thickness; but his detention was but temporary: he succeeded in beating to pieces chains and rings with a sagacity and force, which were always victorious in the end. The effort to restrain him had been renewed, but without success: so that all attempts to control him had been abandoned: and he was left to be the terror of the neighborhood; and had even put a stop to travel upon one of the roads, approaching the city, where his favorite haunt was: as no man was able singly to encounter him. One merely insane can always be governed by the courage of the keeper: and if too turbulent is still manageable by the appliances of modern treatment: and the most violent can be thus curbed: but this instance of the gospels was one, in which all means of subjugation failed: and the strength and ferocity of the demented prevailed and conquered. There probably never was a worse case, in which bars and heavy chains of iron were insufficient: and he had to be left to the direction of his own whims: and he was able to cope with and defend himself against men and wild beasts, which he was always able to dispossess and conquer.

The temptation to self-destruction seemed ever to haunt him. Doubtless it had been found necessary to keep out of his reach all weapons and edged tools: not only for fear of damage to others, but for fear of the harm he might do to himself. Whenever he could find a stone with cutting edge however ragged, he was using it upon himself: and

was frequently discovered with throat lacerated and bleeding, or other soft portions of his body nearly cut through; so that there was a possibility of finding him any morning dead by his own hand. No man ever so abused his own flesh, which ordinarily a man nourisheth and cherisheth with the greatest care. He wore no clothes, and mercilessly exposed himself to all the severities of the weather. He was not only an enemy to himself; but to all the members of his family. His own had hardly escaped from him with their lives. If he did not succeed in killing himself outright, he was destroying himself by inches. Such sleepless excitement, such irregularities of living, and ever recurring attacks upon his own life, could not fail of speedily wearing out the most robust constitution. Self-destruction was but a question of time; and none scarcely would have felt a pang at learning any day that it had been accomplished.

It had not been thus with him always. He had his own home, in which he had been the idol of a loving wife, an affectionate husband and father, and a respected citizen and friend; but a shadow darker than that of death had fallen upon the household, when its head had suddenly become a terror and a danger to all the neighborhood, as well as to those most closely connected with him. Men without fled from him, when they saw him; and the doors of his own house were barricaded to exclude him; neither could his family be safe without constant precautions.

Is there a case in our age parallel to this so briefly, yet so terribly described in these records? Does this nineteenth century possess anything kindred or analagous to this possession by devils? Yes. Every considerable community furnishes examples of as thrilling and as horrid interest. There are those possessed by the demon of drink, the demon of gambling, and the demon of sensuality, whose record if fairly written, would contain as appalling disclosures of hopeless misery. There are those from whose consciences the weight of despair is never lifted; whom no obligation, pledge or promise can bind. Oaths cannot restrain them; nor can the sight of ruin entailed upon impoverished families deter them. The restraints of christian surroundings and church connection are but ropes of sand. If they

suffered alone, the case were less severe; but other lives are so entwined, that misery is multiplied in a geometrical progress. There is no combination of saving potencies, to which recourse can be had for the emancipation of the slaves of these lusts. They are past correction: "thou hast no healing medicines." The despotism of sin is absolute: like death it never lets go. No Gadarene demon ever held fiercer sway, or more stubbornly defied exorcism than these destroyers of our modern era, the drink evil, the gambling evil and the evil of sensuality.

What can break the chains of this voluntary bondage? Who can deliver the captives of these mighty? Only he that is stronger than the strong man armed. There is one in human form, who has the keys of death and of hell; that can open the doors of the prison, and bring out the prisoners languishing without hope. He can save those who have no strength, and break the teeth of the mighty. He is on his way to the city of Gadara at the time of which we are writing.

The first circumstance of interest in the account of the cure is that the possessed man "met him." These poor creatures wherever they were seen to have recognized Jesus, and to have hovered about his path. So this man made no attempt to flee; but, understanding that the approaching teacher was "son of the most high God," came and fell at his feet. The insane distinguish with an intuition peculiar to themselves; but in this case there was more than this insight: the spirits were directing the speech. The man is kneeling and imploring; for the Master had said: "Come out of the man." We are listening to a strange dialogue between the Lord Jesus and the unclean spirits, from which we learn that they were many in number, who held joint possession in this case: that Jesus has supreme jurisdiction over them, and is able to relegate them to the abyss, which is their rightful abode; and that they had no power of mischief on earth independent of his permission. There is a further limitation to the power of Satan: that he can touch no responsible creature without that creature's full consent.

This parley of the demons and their supplications as beings wholly subject to the permission of the Savior, afforded a needed testimony against the calumny of the Pharisees, then beginning to be circulated. They were in utter antagonism and were present on earth, just as evil is permitted, and yet bounded and overruled. Their malicious mischief was the very opposite of the work of Jesus, which was the effecting of good only.

The presence of a large herd of swine, in sight but at a distance, suggested to the demons the desire to be permitted full liberty with regard to them: possession of them, and traffic in them being unlawful to Jews. Our Lord gave them permission in the hearing of the bystanders, of whom there was quite a company as appears: and immediately the poor wretch, who had been in the power of the demons, was freed from the possession: and regained his reason fully as in his best days; and after the lapse of sufficient time was found clothed, and in his right mind, and sitting at the feet of Jesus as he taught; whom indeed he was unwilling to leave for fear of the recurrence of his malady.

We have no doubt that more fervent gratitude, and more devout worship was never rendered than by this restored maniac. We are not told that he fell at his feet and wetted them with tears: but we imagine that his feeling of obligation was like that of Mary of Magdala distinguishing her above all that loved him. The cases of the two may not have been very unlike. We know that he was united to the Savior in bonds which nought could sever.

At the same time, though at a considerable distance, another incident is occurring, the knowledge of which is necessary in order to complete the story of the cure. The large herd of swine, peacefully feeding under the supervision of their keepers, [is seized by an ungovernable frenzy. They are not far from a precipice, with deep water at its base; and the whole herd, at one and the same moment, manifests a fury of determination to make the plunge. The utmost efforts of the swineherds, who are sufficient for any ordinary emergency, cannot prevent the rush. The weight of the charge of such a host is irresistible: besides, the bite of an angry hog or the goring of his tusks, is not lightly to be encoun-

tered. The keepers exposed their lives in vain: and had to flee from the stubborn brutes in mortal terror. They barely saved themselves: and were beyond measure amazed at the causeless, and uncontrollable madness exhibited by the brutes.

Escaping, they filled the city with the news of the loss, and the still more wonderful frenzy, which seemed to have taken possession of each member of the herd; so wild, that had the force of the keepers been doubled, or had the whole population turned out *en masse* to prevent it, every animal would still have perished in the deep sea. The reports of the two incidents met, while the wonder of the city was at its height, and supplemented each other. The restoration of the maniac had evidently a connection with the loss of the swine. By comparison of the accounts of eyewitnesses in both cases, the whole occurrence was explained. The cure of their fellow-citizen had cost the neighborhood from ten to twenty thousand dollars of our money; and had demonstrated the reality of Satanic possessions. That the demons should have had power to incite and exasperate the swine, is no more incredible; than that the great tempter should have been able to take the guidance of the serpent in the garden of Eden, and articulate language through the throat of an animal, that has no vocal utterance, and is incapable of making a sound at all. As we have no knowledge concerning pure spirits, and their command of material things, we are not competent to deny, as we are not to explain.

We are not astonished to read immediately, that the whole population besought him to depart out of their coasts. The loss of so much property, and the fear inspired by the miracle, which so plainly proved his illimitable power, connected with a readiness to correct abuses, prevailed over their desire to listen to his teachings; and led them deliberately to request his departure. Jesus at once took ship and returned; but he left a preacher fully qualified and prepared to keep him before the minds of the people. The restored man besought earnestly that he might be with him: but our Lord had a work for him to accomplish, and commanded him: "Return to thy house and thine

own: and tell them how great things the Lord hath done unto thee, and hath had compassion on thee." We are left to our own imagination to supply something like what may have been the details of his work.

As he approached his own forsaken home, he chose to come in the full light of day, and not as he sometimes had done, during his mental aberration, in the hours of darkness: when his fearful cries banished sleep from all eyes. He also walked leisurely along the traveled road.

Approaching the barricaded house without outcry, and with all the gentleness of long ago, he quietly knocked at the barred door and said: "Wife, I bring you glad tidings of great joy, my love for you has returned in all its early force: I love you as on the day of our espousals: I love our dear children with a new and strong affection: but there is one whom I love better than all. Jesus of Nazareth monopolises my entire affection, and is the centre of my whole desire. He has lifted from my life a mountain load of misery; my heart was a den of devils, and he has cast them out; and he has forgiven my sins; and restored me to you and to himself. My whole desire now is to cherish you, and bring you to the acquaintance of this glorious being, whom to know is everlasting life. I am now ready to begin indeed the new life of love and duty.

And in pursuance of the command given him, he was proclaiming in the streets of the city, come and hear all ye that fear God; and I will declare what he hath done for my soul. He hath spoken unto me, and himself hath done it. But yesterday you would have fled from me as from a wild beast; but now my heart is filled with love for you, and for all men. Jesus of Nazareth did it by a word. He has changed my whole life. Just as at his word when he was approaching our shore, the raging wind fell instantly to a great calm and the sea was still; so to me his word brought instant calm; and the peace of God hushed the raging of my soul. My life was indeed a ceaseless storm; but he is master of the storm. The memory of it is like the remembrance of a horrid nightmare; but he has awakened me to reason and to peace. He that delivered me has power to keep me, and his word is pledged for it;

and on that I rest with an indescribably sweet assurance. My whole desire now is that you all may know him; for to know him is everlasting life. Though you have besought him to depart out of your coasts: yet his mercy endureth forever. The favors which he bestows are worth more than all the swine in the country. The liberation of the captives, the opening of the eyes of the blind, the restoration of the suffering are not to be compared with the loss of stock which we are not authorized to keep. His mercies are granted without money and without price: just as he pitied me in my low estate, and saved me not for my sake: but for his holy name's sake.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE CHARGE OF COMPLICITY WITH SATAN. MATT. 12: 22.

This account affords an example of the truth and honesty of the evangelists. A few verses contain the record of perhaps the most striking display of power in the whole ministry of our Lord; but it is related without a word of description or comment. It evidently made a deeper impression on those who beheld it, than any other mighty work in his whole career. The narrators give us no sufficient statement of the case; and pass over almost in silence all except the hostile comment of the Pharisees, and the unanswerable reply of the master. Occupied with the malicious aspersions of opposers, they give us the briefest possible statement of what gave occasion to their speech. The horrid blasphemy found utterance amid the blaze of the clearest light. These simple-hearted witnesses, not skilled advocates, state facts almost too curtly; and leave us to make out, as best we can, the accompanying circumstances which invest them with an unbounded interest. They were not men of genius; but men of truth. Here they give the scantiest information of a healing which astounded those who beheld it.

The subject was blind, deaf, dumb, and possessed of a devil. Probably born blind and dumb, his insanity and possession by a demon had been the result of the treatment which he had received. The word translated dumb includes also congenital deafness. It is the same word used by the angel to Zacharias, "thou shalt be dumb for a season," and deaf as well; as he understood only by signs made to him. It is now definitely settled, that the deaf and dumb possess the organs of speech in normal condition: that they can be taught to speak: their dumbness being thus ascer-

tained to be the result of perfect and congenital deafness. The patient in this case was then blind and deaf and dumb from birth; and besides was controlled by a demon, having previously become insane from abuse.

Such a one was Laura Bridgeman, an inmate of the blind asylum in Boston, Mass., blind and deaf and dumb. By the most ingenious and persevering instruction, she was enabled to hold communication with the world, to read with understanding; to write, and even to speak. An untiring attention was required in order to effect this; and she received it; and thus became an object of interest and sympathy to a wide circle.

In those ancient days such a child was looked upon as "altogether born in sins," and not deserving of kind treatment even from its own parents, to whom its birth seemed a judgment and a curse. The neglect and aversion with which such a one would be regarded, and the cruelty and harshness with which he would be treated from his earliest recollection, and by everyone; until life became a burden, might easily terminate in a hopeless melancholy, the first stage of insanity. When this insanity became violent, and the patient became vicious, refractory and dangerous, he was a fit subject for satanic possession.

Indeed all the cases of such possession described in the history seem to have been of the insane or idiotic, the demonism being something additional to the insanity or idiocy.

A good God would certainly not subject a human being of normal condition and against his will to such a dominion; or permit such a thing. Perhaps cases of possession do not occur in our day, more than angels appear now; but in the time of Christ angels and devils hung around the earth continually. Yet in occasional instances, it is impossible even in our days to avoid the suspicion that malignant spirits inspire the malicious purposes of the insane. One thing remains true however, that Satan cannot injure free and rational beings without their own consent; but to what extent he may be permitted to use those who are no longer in their right mind, we have no means of determining. The children, of whom two cases are named

as being under this evil influence, must have been either imbecile or idiotic, as children are not ordinarily victims of insanity. Those possessed by Satan are not under the temptation of the devil; but under his full control. Temptation can be resisted and overcome; possession was a more advanced stage, in which resistance to evil had become impossible; and the victim had become the lawful prey of the mighty; his personality had become merged; and his "I" had become "We."

Such was the being, the monster that was brought to Jesus, the most miserable, the most abject, the most horrible of the millions of the race during ages, dumb, deaf; blind, insane, possessed, filthy, furious and resisting; one that had never felt the warm breath of pity, a stranger to love and affection, a fiend in temper. "We read of no father coming with tears; of no mother whose heart was aching over a child's condition. He seems outcast from the sympathy of family and friends, and followed by none of the tenderness which in the case of others supplicated aid with broken sobs. He "was brought" is all that we are told, by superior force probably, as a test to the power of the prophet, as a case surpassing his restoring agency; and Jesus saw himself face to face with an object exhibiting all the worst features of want and ruin that the world ever saw complicated together, or sin ever produced. The misery of two worlds were represented in him; and in him beast and devil contended for mastery.

Greater interest never centered around any sufferer presented for the healing ministrations of the Nazarene; and a crowd never watched with more intense curiosity the result of the application. In the deepest silence all waited with bated breath to see the outcome; looking with horror upon the poor victim of the evil powers, and hardly expecting for him relief, not to say perfect deliverance.

In order to appreciate the full magnitude of the cure effected in this case it is well to dwell a little upon the poor man's condition. In our penitentiaries, the convict dreads above all other punishments confinement in the "solitary," as they call it: to be left to darkness and silence for a period: not to know when the day begins or

terminates; and to be shut off from all communication with the outside world; and left to no companionship but himself, and his own miserable consciousness. Any suffering whatever is considered preferable. This poor creature was in the solitary all the time since birth; and knew nothing else. He was not only destitute of light and sound; he had no conception of either. The gloom and silence of the grave are not more dreadful than his life. Had he been buried in a cell a hundred feet below the surface, where no ray could penetrate, and no jar of sound be ever distinguished; he could not have been more entombed than he was from birth. His mental powers were of course entirely undeveloped; and had made no appreciable advance beyond the stage of infancy; and his knowledge amounted to little more than nothing. His must have been the lowest conceivable grade of intellectual life: the beast nature alone lived in him. Incapable of correspondence with a human being, and left to the brooding of his own melancholy and malignant thoughts, under the conviction that everyone was an enemy and in arms against him, he must have become a terror.

All cheerfulness and hope are associated with the presence of light. Through all generations and in all languages, happiness and light illustrate each other; and darkness and sorrow are associated. By the presence of light we distinguish day and night, and enjoy a visible picture of the passing scene, and of all the world contains; receiving more ideas through the sense of sight than from any other source. Sound is nearly as important to us as light. By it we gain the power of speech; are able to hold intercourse with others; and hear the world around us. Every animate object and most inanimate ones are giving continual notice of their existence by their appropriate voices. How desolate would be the life deprived of these two chief inlets of knowledge, those who possess them are not easily able to conceive. After unmerited abuse had crazed this poor unfortunate, his soul became like some storm swept ruin, built upon some isolated crag, forsaken by everything except the riotous winds, which howled through its doorless and open walls their

doleful music; and Satan finding it empty took possession; and made it his own fearful abode. To be given up to such dominion is the nearest approach to the horrors of perdition ever made in this world: and it was the saddest feature of this case, that he carried in his bosom a hell not his own, and an inmate who breathed only despair. Outcast from home and friends, shunned by everyone, controlled by force only, his life must have resembled more that of a brute, than that of a human being.

The activity of the great tempter, and his ubiquity either in his own person or that of some one of his coadjutors, at every opening, in which God permits him to operate, are a sufficient refutation of the notion, that the hopeless despair of the lost will have a tendency to paralyze their very being, and sink into stagnation all the energies of their immortal nature. We learn from the New Testament history that the intelligent spirit though lost, freed from the incumbrance of our gross flesh, possesses a vitality which cannot be exhausted, and an activity which cannot be restrained. This activity may be devoted to the evil for the evil's sake; but it is an inseparable endowment of the deathless spirit.

When our Lord found himself thus confronted with this most horrid specimen of the human kind, we are told that he restored him perfectly: so that "the blind and dumb both spake and saw:" but we are not informed whether the cure was effected by one step or two: nor are any details given. He probably first cast out the demon, thus quelling the antagonism, and calming the excitement of the patient. In all cases of cure which are described to us, he held communication in some way with the applicant; such as to fix in his mind, that the cure was from himself. He addressed the blind man through the sense of touch, by spreading clay upon his eyelids; with the deaf man who could see, he used pantomime; and having spit upon his own finger, he with it touched his ears and his tongue. He operated thus in order to awaken faith and expectation in their minds; and to make them understand that himself was the author of their restoration. How he proceeded with this poor man, after he had been quieted and ren-

dered passive, who could be addressed only through the sense of touch, we are not informed; however interesting to us it might be to know. We are only certified that the patient regained the full enjoyment of his senses, and knew that he owed all to the power of Jesus.

Had this miracle, more illustrious indeed than the healing of the blind man in Jerusalem and the Gadarene demoniac combined, been wrought in the holy city, instead of being effected in an obscure and almost unknown hamlet, it would have engrossed public attention far more.

At least three distinct miracles were included in this one; and as it was inexplicable on any other ground than that of direct supernatural interposition, it excited greater astonishment among those who beheld it, and those who knew the poor sufferer, than any other healing reported in the gospel history. No room was left for the supposition that it was accomplished by the control which a stronger nature wields over a weaker; nor could it be attributed to the influence which intense excitements exert upon the physical frame; as there was scarcely an avenue to the mind of the patient open to human approach. The feeling of beholders was instinctive and general, "this is the finger of God;" and the general inquiry arose: "is not this the Son of David?" The casting out of devils was commonly classed as the highest display of miraculous energy; and when this was coupled with the giving, not the restoration, of sight and hearing; the cure took rank in the estimation of those cognizant of the sufferer, as surpassing everything known or recorded, and eclipsing all the wonders of the past.

He alone who made man at the first, who has complete dominion over spirit as well as matter, the Lord of the visible and the invisible, was competent to such an achievement. It focussed the rays of the divine glory upon the Nazarene, and proclaimed him the long expected Son of David. His regal descent and the place of his birth were tacitly circulated, if not openly acknowledged. The mighty work was none the less convincing on account of the ob-

security of the place of its occurrence. As it was, the current of feeling was setting strongly towards a reception of Jesus as the Messiah.

The unimpeachable evidence of his control of spiritual as well as material matters, was before the minds of all. Whatever he had been asked to accomplish, he had accomplished without failure in a single instance: he had far exceeded the works of the ancient prophets, as in this last crowning act of power: angels and devils acknowledged him lord: diseases and death owned him lord: all the powers of nature bowed and proclaimed him lord: even the grave and the invisible opened, and saluted him lord: God from heaven had announced him lord: it seemed impossible to escape the conclusion, that he was the great prophet, the expected deliverer. His wisdom, his unaffected dignity, his stainless purity, even his unworldliness and poverty, all confirmed the claim. The Pharisees felt the force of the accumulated testimony, and were unable to deny the miracles, or rebut the reasoning, or escape the conclusion. In this condition of enlightenment, in the mid-day perception of the truth, and acknowledgement of the premises: rather than yield assent, they said: "This man doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils." This explanation had been suggested before: it was now adopted as the proper interpretation of the mysterious ministry passing before their eyes. This was not the mistake of honest men; but the device of intense malignity. It was a lie coined in the mint of sin, stamped with the image and superscription of the prince of darkness, and current among the enemies of truth and light. Adopted by the sect, it placed them beyond the possibility of being convinced by evidence, as they were rejecting the evidence of Jehovah himself.

When however the difficulties of their logic are closely considered, the position of these reasoners is more easily understood. With the pretensions which naturally grew out of the miracles and teachings of the Nazarene, it was impossible, for those who did not receive him as divine, to look upon him as a good man or a true prophet: as he was ascribing to himself the honor which belongs to God only. Were he not a messenger from heaven, and truly

the son of God; he was the basest of imposters; too vile to be described by any word in human language. It was absurd to esteem him a crank, or a self-deceived impostor. This slanderous judgment of the Pharisees admitted the reality of his supernatural qualifications, and the actual and indisputable verity of his miracles: but branded him as an emissary of Satan, and a deceiver from the pit, in the guise of a prophet. This alternative continues to press the rejecters of Jesus Christ in the nineteenth century. If he was not the son of God: he was not a good man: and merits the motto, which Voltaire chose for his signet: "crush the wretch." This is the logical result.

That Jesus was backed by some mysterious supernatural alliance, some unseen aid, whose efficiency was all-pervasive, and almighty, was patent to all. He represented this power as authorized by the Father: but vested in himself; when he said: "I will; be thou clean," "I have done one work, and ye all marvel." He claimed the wisdom as resident in himself: when he said, "Verily, verily *I* say unto you." He claimed infinite truth when he challenged his enemies, "Which of you convinceth me of sin." The good and the lovely and the pure is always the true. To doubt him and to withhold confidence, is to reject him: but to say that all this power and wisdom and mercy is from Satan, whose every throb is a wail and a gnashing of teeth, is moral suicide. It is dashing away the only persuasion, that has in it hope and light and comfort.

Our Lord condescended to answer this malignant slander; though he did not commonly notice such: and his reply was conclusive. "Every house," i. e., every family "divided against itself," by an internal feud, in which one party is seeking the destruction of the other, "comes to desolation." It is like a man cutting off his own limbs, or tearing out his own vitals. A kingdom torn by inward convulsion and civil war can never stand. This is a national suicide. So, if I am counted as being in collusion with Satan, my whole errand being to destroy the works of the devil; there is civil war in his camp; and enemies within will destroy any kingdom; so that "his kingdom cannot stand."

All the maladies of the human race, consequent upon the introduction of sin, were classed by Jesus as the works of the devil; and his own great object was to rectify these disorders, and restore the condition which sin had destroyed. The parties were in the most direct antagonism. He refused to receive the testimony of the demons to his high personality, not suffering them to bear evidence of him at all: as Paul and Silas at Philippi were grieved to seem to owe their reception to the recommendation of the devil. And then it was evident to all observers that the demons obeyed the word of Christ with evident reluctance: they were overpowered, and submitted to irresistible control. Diseases yielded instantly to his simple word: demons came out indeed at his command; but with frightful demonstrations of resistance: nor did they comply instantly; but first exhausted their rage upon their suffering victims. They were evidently submitting to an authority which they hated, but could not withstand. To pronounce the two parties, Jesus on the one hand and the demons on the other, allies and coöperators, was an absurdity and a crime.

And farther, when was it ever heard that the aid of Satan was given for the alleviation of suffering; or the removal of distress. The great enemy of God and man is malignant in all his operations. He introduced sin and all our woe by the seduction of our first parents; and his efforts tend all the time to the diffusion of evil, and its consequent anguish: and he grinds his teeth at the spectacle of innocent happiness. When allowed liberty to show his hand, as we see in the history of Job, he moved by pestilence, lightning, and destroying wind: and his fury was directed against the righteous, the excellent of the earth. If he had thus permission now to disturb and distress by his own immediate intervention, the world would wear a quite different aspect: and human life would be a quite different experience from what it is. We should see confusion and disorder even among the stars of heaven, were his power suffered to reach to them. These objectors seemed to be attributing to Beelzebub an independent authority, and a partnership with the Almighty in the administration of the

world. In their view nothing was absurd except the admission of the claims of Jesus of Nazareth.

In these words of the Pharisees there was concentrated a scorn, which escapes notice in the English version, and indeed in all versions. They do not call the prince of darkness by his true name, "Beelzebub," but "Beelzebul" the god of ordure and nastiness, dung-god; by a parody depreciating not the devil, but his partner the Nazarene. To this untranslatable blasphemy were they led by incorrigible opposition to the incarnation of divine mercy; thus attributing the works of the Holy Spirit to satanic agency.

Nothing spoken against Jesus Christ ever angered him; the most, even "all manner of sin and blasphemy he would willing forgive: but the man, who attributes the mighty, work of the Holy Spirit to the infernal powers, puts himself beyond the reach of the saving action of that Holy Spirit. His power is needed for the illumination and cleansing of the soul, as much as the atoning blood is needed for its justification before God. By this blasphemy, the opposer puts away his last, his only hope: and must forever perish not because the blood of Christ cannot atone for his guilt; not because there is a lack of mercy in the Godhead; but because of the despite done to the spirit of grace, without whose illumination he will never come to the Savior, whom God has "set forth." The pain which this speech gave the the holy son of God, was only sorrow on their own account. "He who blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, hath never forgiveness; but is in "danger of eternal sin;" a reading which Griesbach pronounces of equal authority with the eternal "damnation" in Mk. III: 29. Eternal damnation is eternal sin. "He endured the contradiction of sinners against himself," and wept at their doom. Love, that could not be angered, mercy, that still yearned for their salvation, had no place in the heart of a devil: we are looking upon the picture of the perfect one: and as we behold it, we cry Holy, Holy, Holy. The sight of him subdues our hardness, and binds us to him in everlasting bonds.

It is not matter of wonder that the poor Jew is rejected of heaven: the rejection is his own act, involving his children for succeeding generations. He abandoned his

reason and his God at the same time. His religion has since been the thinnest cloak of hypocrisy. Devout Romanists have been seen; devout heathen have been reported; but a devout Jew is not to be found. In his own religious system, he has no confidence; but still adheres to it with the pertinacity of a martyr. There is no demand for understanding or reason in his scheme. His scriptures are unintelligible: "there is no light in them;" but he treasures them with the utmost veneration for their age, and their connection with his ancestry; but his study is how not to receive them intelligently. His rules of interpretation are fantastic; and he reads them by the light of a fog; clinging still to the prescriptions of tradition, and walking in the ruts of antiquity. He is sharp in all his plans for money getting; his race in every generation produces some of the world's greatest men; but in his religion the blindness of his fathers still enshrouds him. Oh what a rejection of Jesus was that of two thousand years ago, that has carried so thick a veil over sixty generations!

To return to the poor sufferer of this piece of history, what an experience was it to be set down at once, with a full perception of all that was passing, in the full glory of that sun which has been worshipped by millions, with senses open to the new and unconceived beauty of the scene, and the full-toned music of nature! Nothing like it ever entered into the experience of man, since the day when Adam stepped out into life in the full maturity of his powers, and took in the glory and the joy of all with every sense. Jesus had won a living trophy, and a loud-voiced witness. This poor man's soul was a midnight chaos, when Jesus stood above it, and said: "Let there be light," and let sound enter this silence. When light and sound entered his life, probably a spiritual light also dawned in his soul. The first object which met his astonished gaze was Jesus himself; and for a time perhaps no other vision could divide his attention. He read the Savior in the man Jesus; and a new born sense springing in his soul intensified his view. He that could deliver him from

his prison, could also deliver him from all evil; he could emancipate the soul as well, and would with the same love grant the greater boon.

What a picture of the condition of humanity is afforded by this poor slave of the infernal powers! All the misfortunes attaching to his state meet in the spiritual condition of man: before he is set at liberty by the Son of God. He is blind born: and not only blind, but deaf; and not only blind and deaf but a slave of evil. In the instance before, it was a case of misfortune altogether unattended by blameworthiness on his part; in the case of erring man, the blindness is a wilful blindness; the want of hearing and the subjection to the evil powers have in them the element of guilt. They show a willing and a guilty surrender to evil control. This is describing man as a great sinner, which everything demonstrates to be the sad fact. Jesus Christ is a Savior fully adequate to the great occasion: and has power on earth not only to forgive sins; but to set free the most hopeless captive of Satan.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE GROWING HATRED AGAINST THE NAZARENE. LUKE XII.

[The reader will please first consult Luke xi: 37-44.]

The evangelists are not relating the acts of the Jewish people; but the doings of their Lord and master. In the course of the history, a view is obtained incidentally of the feeling towards him. Citizens of any land, moved by the same interests and hopes, agree in opinion and feeling. One scene taken at random is a sample of the attitude of the best stratum of Jewish society toward the prophet in their midst. A Pharisee had, as related in Luke xi: 37, invited our Savior to dine; and at the table amid marked civility and politeness, the irrepressible hatred and murderous antipathy became visible, which were taking possession of the Jewish heart. The character of the interview may be gathered from the exhortations given to the crowd outside, when he left the house.

A countless throng consisting of many ten thousands were awaiting his reappearance. More attended him than had rushed to greet Alexander of Macedon, when he passed through their country; or than would assemble to meet the great Augustus, should he take Syria in the route of an imperial progress. The people trod one upon another. There have been instances in which individuals have walked over the heads of men closely jammed into so compact a mass, as to be unable to prevent or resist the outrage. Such was the press at this time. Our Savior, in Luke xii, is giving utterance to the impressions made by the outburst of enmity just witnessed; and we hear in his words the very throbbings of his human heart.

1. First of all, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. As the leaven permeates the whole lump, and sours every particle of the mass; so hypocrisy

pollutes every act, permeates the whole life, and renders the whole character odious to God. It has the smell of moral corruption. He will have no whited sepulchres among his accepted servants; full within of dead men's bones and all uncleanness: but embellished outwardly with a thin coating of morality. Nothing do men detest more than dissimulation practiced on themselves; God abhors it more decidedly. Sincerity and truth are the first element of acceptable worship, and of acceptable obedience. Men may be deceived by the profession and show of friendship; God never. Men may deceive even themselves; they can never deceive God. His eyes pierce through all disguises, and to him the darkness shineth as the day. Nothing can be dearer to him than truth. It is one of the most august and glorious of his perfections. It is the uncreated radiance which invests his mighty throne, and blazes in overpowering splendor from his seat. "He seeketh such to worship him, as worship in spirit and in truth." Without this deep seated sincerity worship is but mockery, and professions are but flatteries and lies. What has ever roused his wrath more speedily than falsehood, or brought down more instant vengeance? "First of all beware," not in order of time merely; but in rank of importance. "of hypocrisy." True religion can never become a joy, a well of water springing up unto everlasting life; it can never become a power, new creating the soul; it cannot even exist apart from the most transparent honesty and sincerity.

2. "And I say unto you, my friends: Be not afraid of them that kill the body: and after that have no more that they can do."

This was no uncalled for exhortation. A hatred had revealed itself, that would be satisfied with nothing less than blood. The vilest crimes never stirred such rancor, as the loving words and loving deeds of Jesus. The world stands amazed at the virulence of the enmity which he aroused. His final taking off was no sudden act dictated by the frenzy of the moment: it was the bursting out of a long smouldering fire. His life had been attempted in Nazareth, so cutting was the sword that proceeded out of his mouth: A like attempt was made in Jerusalem, on the occasion of

his second visit: stones had twice afterwards been suddenly taken to destroy him; and these assaults show an inconceivable force to have been infused into his words: that they were shot out as arrows from the quiver of the Almighty. The record of every conversation conveyed to us shows, that the malignity of the hearers misinterpreted and distorted every saying of his: and found subject of fresh dissatisfaction in every utterance.

His disciples saw and shrank from the fiery ordeal: they had trembled at the display of venom just exhibited; and needed the exhortation, "be not afraid." The time indeed came, when they could tread Satan under their feet, and walk upon the waves of hostile passion; but that elevation was slowly gained. Jesus was an example of all that was great and glorious. The threat of death, instead of intimidating him, kindled a new lustre in his eye.

He certainly was not comforting his disciples, according to our idea of comfort, as they followed him trembling, when he spoke of the opposition which his gospel would encounter, vs. 51st: "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, nay; but rather division:" a war shall ensue, whose heat shall dissolve the closest ties of nature. "Brother shall deliver up brother to death: and children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death:" for Jesus' sake. This is a rage before which we stand appalled: but our Lord concealed nothing; but was fortifying them against the storm. The master met worse than his church has ever encountered.

What other religion has ever aroused such enmity, and "sailed through bloody seas," and may have yet to meet again the same opposition?

"Fear them not therefore." Watchful eyes are over you. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without your Father's consent; nor a hair from your heads, of which he ordains and keeps the number. Brave men are cowards in this war. Peter was a brave man; but he needed a higher quality of courage for this contest. Our Lord was not falsely representing his service as an easy task, and holding out illusive hopes of victory without conflict or damage. This will be a war with mighty sacrifice of life, like

the battles which have decided the world's destiny; but victory will be worth all it may cost. The cause is the cause of truth and righteousness, and of God; the leader is the lion of the tribe of Judah; the battle is the Lord's; the triumph certain.

3. Another kindred exhortation was not to be ashamed of him; but to confess him boldly before men. In the company which they had just left, the disciples had withered under the unutterable scorn, with which they and their master had been regarded, the exhibitions of which are more grievous to be borne than fires of Moloch. Its shafts are as piercing as the sword of the murderer. Scorn reduces its victim to a cipher; condemns him as the offscouring of the earth; and tramples him in the dust. Jesus is still the rejected one. Self-righteousness still loathes him: he is the scoff of the profane jester; and every man is by birth a mocker. "This child is set for a sign that is spoken against;" and still is the scorn of the world. But he who is now ashamed of Jesus will see the day when himself, completely overwhelmed by shame, will call on rocks and mountains to fall on him and hide him.

There is but one religion, and one religious leader, of whom men are ever ashamed: it is Christ Jesus and his service. The heathen is not ashamed of the foulest orgies, connected with the worship of gods representing man's basest passions. He will bow down to gods of gold or silver or wood or stone, or to infinitely viler objects: and worship them with rites not worthy of being named; and is not ashamed of his god or of the worship. The Mahometan will perform his devotions before the world; drop upon his knees at the hour of prayer even in the busy street; and acknowledge one of the most brutal of the human race as the prophet of God; and go his way to make himself as brutal if possible; and do it all without a blush. The poor Catholic will practice the forms of his tradition openly without shame. The world may behold him telling his beads on bended knee, or abjectly cowering before a pseudo-priest; and his face is not covered with a blush.

No votary of a false faith however absurd, or devotee of a worship however debasing, feels the agony of shame. Of Jesus the Holy, the True, men are ashamed. It is counted a great stoop for them to condescend to become his disciples. Indeed they cannot enlist under him without breaking through a barrier strong as that which bounds the sea. None would be seen praying to him; though prayer is the first instinct of their spiritual nature; and if they believe in him, they hesitate to acknowledge the fact to their intimate associates. Shame belongs to guilt. In the presence of the Holy Jesus, devils cower with shame: human shame is kindred to theirs in its origin: it is the abjectness of sin in the presence of the holy one. The first step towards the recovery of the soul from the power of sin, is the overcoming of this shame of the great leader of the truth and the right. Jesus is the captain of those who overcome the world, and are superior to its seductions.

The church of Christ is to expect persecution, and to think the fiery trial no strange thing; but the great Savior is never nearer to his people, than when they are suffering for his sake. He was with the three Hebrew children in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, to deliver them; that the smell of fire was not on their garments. He has been in every fire kindled against them since. In the reign of the bloody Mary, Thomas Bilney, a most zealous Christian but a man of an exceedingly weak and timid character, was arrested and forced to recant. After a year of inconsolable anguish, he surrendered himself to be burned. His friends, fearful for his constancy still, agreed with him, that if he found himself able to endure the flame, he should give them a sign to that effect, by raising his hand while he yet had the power. After waiting some time, he gave them the signal of victory, by waving his hand three times above his head. The savior of the three Hebrews was with him in the fire.

But one saint has been delivered from the lions, Daniel who slept calmly with a lion pillow under his head. Hundreds of thousands have been cast to the lions; but Daniel's savior has pillowed their souls in every case. Each stab at his followers strikes the bosom of the Savior and

pierces his heart: sorrow endured for him shall be repaid by a crown of glory that fadeth not away. It is to be feared, that the church of the present is losing its distinction; and meets from the world a far more tolerant treatment than the great leader met. The world has by no means lost its hostility: if the manner of its exhibition is varied.

4. Take heed and beware of covetousness. An episode is introduced by an interruption from one in the assembly, appealing to Jesus against his own brother, unwilling to divide an inheritance fairly. It furnishes an example of the great teacher's ability to make every occurrence subservient to his discourse. His followers are not to be engrossed in the pursuit of worldly good. They are not to seek the highest places and the best things in the two worlds. For a stimulus to their faith, they are directed to consider the ravens and the lilies. The ravens thrive: while the farmer defends his fields against them, and kills them for robbing him, if he can: but God puts in a crop for them every year of wild fruits, berries and nuts. "God feedeth them." God clothes the lilies, and paints their adornments with colors, that Solomon might envy, but could not attain. So he will feed and clothe his followers; but the curse upon man is, that they must work to obtain their needed supplies. Seek not earthly good too eagerly. God may in some exceptional cases call his servants to fill seats of power, or manage hoards of wealth, like Joseph and Daniel: but only such as would surrender their possessions and honors instantly like Daniel: rather than be in a position which would betray them into any step dishonoring to their God.

5. The scene in the house just left brought vividly before the mind of Jesus his approaching sufferings and death. "But I have a baptism to be baptised with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" The deadly enmity just exhibited brought the future trials home to his human comprehension with a realizing force. He almost felt the breath of the traitor's kiss, the rude grasp of the soldiers, and the indignities, by which the world would express its hatred. Some of the party at the dinner possibly were to be active participants in the coming tragedy.

It is impossible to frame a rational interpretation of the hatred aroused by him. Its commencement cannot be determined, more than the causes which produced it. It seems to have been instinctive and universal. Cain had no real cause of complaint against Abel: his dissatisfaction should have been with the decision of Jehovah against himself; yet his hatred of his brother was more dire, than it could have been from any actual blameworthiness of Abel. Jesus was the favorite of heaven, and the Son of God; and therefore they slew him. It is not needful to inquire after a cause; "they hated him without a cause." His question, "for which of these works do ye stone me?" could not be answered. No record remains of the words uttered at the table: but we know from our Lord's replies that the attack had been dire. The host, when he invited him, had probably no deliberate intention of entrapping his guest: the other visitors probably attended rather out of respect and honor to the great teacher; but they found themselves unintentionally betrayed into an exhibition of that spontaneous enmity by which human nature is generally actuated against the Christ, which here broke over all the rules of decorum, and swept the company off their feet. A reprover, whose word is justified by the sanction of conscience, and sustained by the demonstration of heaven's approval, seems to the man in error, as Elijah appeared to the eyes of Ahab: "hast thou found me. O mine enemy?" Words against Jesus had been uttered, and words unpardonable because against the Holy Ghost; the speaker would never beg pardon for them.

The one great object of the incarnation of the Son of God was to atone by death for the sins of the world; and this engrossed his thoughts continually. When called upon for a sign, his constant reply was a reference to his death and resurrection. The only subject of discourse upon the Mount of Transfiguration was his decease. His thoughts were full of it: the view of its approach "straitened" him: held him as a sickness holds a patient. The supposition is unavoidable, that this was the subject of his prayers protracted through nights of watching, when sleep forsook his

eyes: and there was none to whom he could unbosom himself, except the eternal Father. The time of his sufferings was the period of supreme importance in the eternities: and upon that brief space pivoted the divine administration from the creation onward.

When this earth sprang into its place among the worlds, and God was fashioning it for human habitation, then Christ was by him "rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth; and his delights were with the sons of men." He loved the very earth on which they were to live, and the ground they would tread. "When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy," it was in anticipation of his appearance on this earth, himself leading the joy. Often before his incarnation, he assumed the semblance of a human form: and was with his people. "In all their affliction, he was afflicted; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old." His sympathy was always with us, and the yearnings of his heart. Jesus felt the time rushing on, for which he had waited; and for which ages had been preparing.

This was not a contest of the Jews merely against him: the hiss of the old serpent of Eden, whose head he was to crush, was in the clamor. This earth was the battle ground of the universe: and the trumpet that marshaled the forces of the pit, was uttering its battle call. The great conflict was fast approaching. "For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire." The burning took place on Calvary: the lamb of sacrifice was the fuel of the fire. Jesus conquers men, not by destroying them; but by dying for them and in their behalf. Thus he crushes the head of Satan.

6. The signs of the times then present were as easily read as the ordinary signs of the sky. Vs. 54, 55, 56. The time of Messiah's advent had been so definitely fixed by prophecy, as not to be innocently mistaken. The nation evinced their conviction that it had come, by their readiness to fall in with the false Messiahs of the succeeding age. Not one appeared, who did not agitate the heart of

the people, and make their pulses throb; though not one made a stand, to which they could gather.

The last Old Testament prophet announced his next successor, as the Elijah, the immediate precursor of the man of destiny. One almost Elijah's self reproduced had come. John was miraculously born a prophet. Not Moses nor Elias were more unquestionably prophets sent of God. He needed no miracle to accredit him. It was universally admitted even by enemies that he bore witness to Jesus as the Messiah. His speedy death emphasized his testimony. He was not permitted to add another word, as it were, to those, by which he had designated the Nazarene. He uttered the voice and died. But Jesus had greater witness than that of John. The Father's was given and repeated daily through the works. The smallest real miracle is as perfect an authentication of a message from heaven, as the most astounding

Miracles designate epochs, and mark periods which God would signalize as the most important in earth's history. Upon no period has the stamp of the divine BEHOLD been more luminously placed; than upon the time of the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. By these miracles God is saying to all ages: "behold the Lamb of God." The evidence that Jesus was sent of God, was multiplied a thousand fold in the most striking displays of help to the needy and suffering; for such is the mission of the Savior; and such the works that most suitably accredit him. To disbelieve in the face of such evidence, and resist such accumulated proofs, shows a deadly hatred of the truth. Their criminality was greater than could result from the accumulated murdering of all the prophets, from the time of Abel to the time of Zaccharias, who perished between the altar and the temple. It should all be required of that generation.

The discourse was completed by an individual application. Each man is represented as in the power of an adversary, who has a legal claim, which cannot fail of being sustained and enforced by the court, to which both complainant and defendant are hastening under warrant. A man conscious of the justice of the claim against him, and aware of the

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inevitable issue, should the case come to trial, would devote himself with all zeal to some friendly arrangement with the complainant, by which the matter could be settled out of court. God is the adversary of the parable: man the defendant; death the sheriff; and hell the prison. Eternal interests depend on the decision of the hour.

This discourse seems to have been the expression of the moment, suggested by the incidents of the dinner table just left; and the visit shows how the leaven of opposition was working through Jewish society. In this case politeness threw aside its mask: kindness and breeding were forgotten: forms were discarded; and the veil slipped from the hearts of the company: and they found themselves transported into open insult, where they had intended civility. Jesus was ever open as the day: but in the human heart there is an inborn opposition to him; and his entertainers were undoubtedly astonished to find themselves transformed into accusers and revilers. "He could not be hid;" every look, every word betrayed him; and those, who could not receive him in his real character, felt themselves aroused to a fury of contradiction surprising themselves. The feelings awakened in our Lord attest his perfect humanity; the very suggestions and sympathies of a sinless humanity were working in him; while the tone of Godhead is strangely audible throughout.

These Israelites, on account of their superlative clamishness, were more harmonious and concurrent in their measures than other nations. What was done by them was done unanimously. Opinions and feelings were communicated in their great assemblies thrice each year. He who dissented had to breast an unusual tide of opposition. It is easily seen from this narrative, how the leaven of enmity against the Nazarene was slowly and surely pervading the mass. In this company there was no dissent: all instinctively arrayed themselves against him: and unquestionably expressed the common conviction of their nation. They were in such rebellion against every word of his mouth, against every look of his eyes, every movement, that their dislike could not be smothered by the customs of etiquette, or be concealed by silence. They reflected the popular sentiment.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE TRANSFIGURATION.

The first thought suggested by this account is the utter unreliability of tradition, which has fixed on Mount Tabor as the locality of this sublime manifestation. The summit bears the remains of fortifications, and other structures, antedating the age of Jesus by many centuries; and therefore could not have been the selected spot. "If thou lift up thy tool upon it, then thou hast defiled it" was true of temple and altars dedicated to Jehovah; and of the place chosen for this brief display of the heavenly glory. It was rather some amphitheatre in the bosom of the Hermon range, shut out from all observation; unmarked by human touch, but left as God had fashioned it, that can thus never be identified.

As great confidence can be placed in the identification of the true cross, and the handkerchief of St. Veronica, as in the tradition which fixes any of the holy places. The cave of the nativity with an entrance sloping nearly 45 degrees, and church of the Holy Sepulchre, are both impossible localities: as also is Mount Tabor. If there is any mountain in the holy land, where the transfiguration did not occur, that spot is Mount Tabor. The same wisdom, that concealed the sepulchre of Moses "that no man knoweth of it unto this day," has ordered, that no trace or vestige should remain, where idolatry can erect its shrine, and externalism make its pilgrimage.

"A sign from heaven" had been loudly and repeatedly demanded; and was about to be vouchsafed: but not to the curious and caviling crowd; not even to all of the twelve apostles. Our Lord was impatient of the presence of witnesses; and tolerated only the smallest number necessary to establish the facts. "Out of the mouth of two or

three witnesses shall every word be established." Coming generations are to receive the account "not having seen:" therefore but three were privileged to behold; and three were enough to certify. His mightiest wonders were witnessed by few spectators: his walk upon the Sea of Galilee as upon a level floor in the midst of rolling waves and angry winds; and his ascension to heaven were seen by the twelve only; and this exceeding glory, the only scene of unearthly and befitting splendor in his career, had the very fewest beholders.

This transfiguration was consequent upon the avowal by his disciples of their faith in him as the son of God. As they had been passing among the villages of Cesarea Philippi, he had been asking them all day these questions: and at last in some sequestered spot, surrounded by the twelve, after prayer marking the occasion as one of the most decided solemnity, and the very crisis of his ministry in his own estimation, he repeated them; and demanded of each of them individually and personally in the most pointed way possible: "Whom do men say that I am?" and "whom do ye say that I the son of man am?" A more important inquiry was never made: a subject of deeper interest was never broached.

"What think ye of Christ" is the query which, according to the answer returned, will settle the eternal destiny of men. The apostles had had abundant time to mature a deliberate opinion of him. They had seen, and heard, and been admitted even to the privacy of his prayers. The veil had been drawn completely aside from his mysterious personality; on the recognition of which our salvation depends. He was transparent as the light, and had made no concealment with them. It was time for him to demand an avowal of faith; and this he did, making it a personal examination to each.

To his first question "Whom do men say that I am?" they replied that none said that he was the Christ. Notwithstanding the voice from heaven, the witness of the Baptist, and the testimony of the works, none seemed to have entertained the opinion, that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, and a divine personage. He was the very

opposite of the one, whom the nation expected. On the contrary some say that thou art John the Baptist, others Elias, others Jeremias or one of the old prophets risen from the dead. They were looking for the personal appearance of Elias as "say the Scribes." The return of Jeremias personally was expected, without warrant however from the scriptures, to reveal the hiding place of the ark with its holy contents; which it was supposed that he had concealed at the first destruction of Jerusalem.

We gain from this reply a degree of light to aid our conception of the appearance of Jesus. John, Elias and Jeremias had all passed into the grave. There was something in the appearance of the Nazarene, that suggested that he was some holy person returned from the spirit world. The gross animalism, which marks us as of kin to the brutes, was absent: and the delicacy, refinement and spirituality of his countenance and frame, etherialized as it were by the purification of the grave, stamped him as entirely above the reach of carnality and corruption. The body was servant and not master: and was but a transparent screen of a celestial indweller, the ready instrument of his mercy. The solemnity of another world illuminated his features; and the invisible was to him more real and commanding than the material and present. His communion was with the unseen. Riches, honors and pleasures were to him as small as they will seem to us in the article of death. A heavenly atmosphere was about him; and to believe him a fraud or an imposter was utterly impossible. His body like our own was made of the dust of the earth; but he was the "second man" direct from the hand of God, unfallen, undefaced. Evil had never touched him to defile. Appetite never controlled him: passions never impelled him. He was "separate from sinners." He was not of the world. It is not matter of wonder that a superstitious people, believing in the possibility of a return from the other world, should say of Jesus: "he is one of the old prophets risen again."

To the question, "But whom say ye that I am?" Peter hastened to respond: "Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God." God had become to him a great reality.

The companionship of the Nazarene deepened, and intensified the religious convictions of all associated with him. This expression of belief commanded assent from each, individually speaking for himself: Judas not excepted, who always went with the majority, and voted for whatever carried; and who was also intellectually convinced. By approval of this reply Jesus proclaimed himself to be the Christ, the son of the living God: and pronounced his solemn blessing upon Peter: "For flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee; but my father which is in heaven."

These words impart to us the great truth; that no man can believe in his heart that Jesus Christ is very God; except as he understands himself to be a lost sinner, which God alone can teach us. The careless world can receive Jesus as a prophet, and applaud his teachings; none but a conscious sinner can receive him as a divine Savior. "No man can call Jesus Lord," i. e. Jehovah "but by the Holy Ghost." A sense of guilt alone opens our eyes to a perception of the real standing of Christ. Sinners in danger of perdition discerned him through his disguise as man; while learned Pharisees were blind. The penitent harlot, and the dying thief knew him, as does everyone overwhelmed with the sense of guilt, and danger of the judgment of God.

Our Lord proceeds: "Also, I say unto thee that thou art Peter or stone: and on this stone will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." This rock, on which the church was to be built, was not Peter; but the great truth which he had been the first to profess. The doctrine of the full divinity of Christ is to be the foundation doctrine, which we are to receive with a belief firm as rock. About whatever else we may waver, in this we are to be immovable as rock. The gates of hell, the delusions of self-righteousness, the conceits of morality and legalism have ever fought against this truth; and often with fire and sword: and will continue the contest to the end, but shall not prevail. Not only does the scripture plainly declare him God; but the necessities of our souls

require a divine helper, and our guilt requires a divine atonement. Nothing less than blood divine can cleanse the stain of sin.

Were Christ not God supreme; but only an exalted inferior being; his death would be no more efficacious than that of the lamb upon the Jewish altar; or of the fly upon the point of the child's pin. It is divinity alone that gives it virtue. The scripture calls the blood of Jesus of Nazareth the "own blood" of God, and his life the life of God. The excellency of his offering lies in the fact that "he gave *himself* for us." The discovery of the merit of his offering is made at the same moment: when we awake to the sense of the deadly nature of sin, and the immensity of our guilt.

When we become sensible that we need a Savior *mighty* to save, Jesus is revealed to us in his real character. The Lord had at length a privileged few who were beginning to penetrate his disguise; and to be established in an intelligent understanding of his personality. It was proper that this declaration of faith should be emphasized by the vision that followed; and that their minds should be opened to still larger views of his glory. "He that hath to him shall be given; and he shall have abundance." The vision seems to have occupied the principal part of the night or the whole; as they ascended the mountain in the evening, and returned when the next day was partly passed.

The three disciples knew nothing of what was to occur; and were sleeping while the Master was praying: until the brightness of the light awoke them. Jesus was the central figure; and the light emanated from his person, the whole of which was lustrous. His dark and sombre raiment became whiter than anything white on earth from the lustre within; and we are reminded of the description of him in Rev. ch. I:14-15: "His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto brass, as if they burned in a furnace. His face did shine as the sun." When he appeared to Saul on his way to Damascus, the light was brighter than the sun at midday. This night of wonders was designed to teach them and us:

1. That Jesus was the subject of all the prophecies and the end of all the types of the past ages. "To him give all the prophets witness." The two present on that mountain stand for the whole glorious company. How all would have hastened to unite in glorifying Christ, had it been permitted, we can imagine: two were sufficient for a testimony, and he would have no more. The disciples had been unable to reconcile the predictions of the Old Testament, as they understood them, with what they saw in their master: on that memorable night they learned, that whether their interpretations were correct or not: the Messiah, who was the great burden of prophecy, was none other than their own Jesus. The difficulty experienced by them lay in the fact, that there are in the sacred books two separate, and wholly distinct strains of prediction: one, representing the royal dominion, the subjection of the nations, the glories and blessings of the rule of the Christ: and another emphasizing the lowness of his condition, the rejection, the repudiation, the unanimous opposition: and the variety and intensity of his sufferings. The harp of prophecy sounded with triumphant melody the exaltation: but with all its glorious tones there mingled a mysterious under-plaint of agonies and groans, and accompaniment of woe. The Jewish solution has been the fiction of two Messiahs: both descriptions seeming impossible of application to one person. Their difficulty was the abjectness of their master's worldly condition.

Moses has preserved for us the first announcement made in Eden of a miraculous conception somewhere adown the ages, when a second man should appear, who should also be Jehovah, without human father. He was not to be a Jewish deliverer; but a redeemer of the race, who should bruise the head of the old serpent, and restore our lost inheritance forfeited by sin. He was to be the child given, the son born, the Emmanuel. The world was to be disappointed in him, when he should appear. His advent was to be like the rising of the sun; "all flesh shall see it together." "The sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his beams;" all nations shall be blessed in him; he shall be the axis on which the world's history revolves; the one who

shall receive the unmeasured fulness of the Holy Spirit; and make known all things: yet he shall be a mere Nazar, a sprout from the old perished stump of Jesse, "without form or comeliness," a "root out of the dry ground" of human depravity, "a worm and no man," a reproach of men and despised of the people."

The ages had been preparing for his appearing; a nation had been organized, and miraculously perpetuated to distinguish him; heaven and hell were moved at his coming; and yet "he had no beauty wherefore we should desire him. We hid, as it were, our faces from him; he was despised and we esteemed him not." We do not know that any new interpretations were afforded; but they were certified, and we through them; that every prediction of the prophets either had been, or was to be fulfilled to the letter in Jesus of Nazareth. The two dispensations form a perfect continuity, a development.

2. This vision also taught them that their master was the son of God in a sense far higher, than that usually attached to the words. By a son of God, the Jews of that day understood a man endowed with the highest gifts of wisdom, and power, and supremely favored by an assisting providence. Their ideas lacked definiteness; but implied that the Messiah was to be the very highest, and chiefest of the human family; if they did not attribute to him super-human excellence. Some even made his origin antedate the creation of Adam; but he was still to be only a man: they did not attribute to him a divine nature. In this sense angels are sons of God, and likewise good men by a stretch of the figure. Jesus in his humanity was truly and properly the son of God; but this night taught them, that this designation had a far higher meaning, when applied to him: in his spiritual personality he was son of God.

A distinction of persons in the God-head, though not clearly taught in the old testament, is yet distinctly intimated. Indeed every doctrine of the new is contained in the Jewish scriptures in embryo, as it were, awaiting development. Indeed they are all contained in the one book of Genesis. We there read of a personage called the angel of the Lord, who receives divine honors and worship; who

swears by himself: names himself "I am that I am:" who leads Israel by a pillar of cloud and fire; excludes them from the land of Canaan for their unbelief: and dispenses blessings by his own sovereignty; according to his pleasure. The three coexist as Jehovah, the angel Jehovah and the spirit Jehovah.

In accordance with this plurality in unity, the first verse of Genesis reads: "In the beginning Gods *he* created the heavens and the earth." This is but an example of a large class of passages; and another equally striking class occurs in which a plural verb is construed with the name of God in the singular, viz.: "Thou art a God that judgest (plural) in the earth." We do not suppose that the minds of the three disciples were clear; but one thing was evident: that their master was son of God not only as to his humanity; but that his relation was such as no creature could sustain. They were catching a glimpse of his native glory. Prophets had taken their orders from him; and sink out of sight when he appears, as the stars hide themselves before the sun. The mightiest of them confess their measureless inferiority, while God proclaims: "hear ye *him*." Let prophets stand aside. "He is the faithful and true witness," who alone came down from heaven, and "speaks what he does know and testifies what he has seen." He teaches from his own fulness, and draws from the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, being alone capable of reading the seven-sealed book of the divine mysteries. If this scene was a brief view of the glory of Christ, it was the smallest glimpse that could be revealed.

3. Another thing vividly taught by that night of revelations, was the coming death of him they followed; and that this death was to be the condition of men's salvation; the purchase price of all good. They had shown themselves intensely averse to hearing anything of this kind: Peter speaking for all had even remonstrated against it; yet to die was the one, the only object of our Savior's mission, so to speak; God has many messengers and many methods; there was but one who could redeem, and he by death only. The necessity of this death was the lesson to be learned. The disciples probably understood his words about death, and the resur-

rection from the dead, as figures of speech; whose real signification events alone could reveal. The more exalted their views of their master became, the more impossible it seemed to them that he, the Lord of life, who had the keys of death and of hell, should ever be subject to death, the result and effect of sin. The object of Christ was not to break the shock of the catastrophe, when it should arrive; but to enforce the great truth of the necessity of his atonement. The government of God is more clearly illustrated, and its great principles more effectually demonstrated in this, than in any other world of his dominion. This earth is the centre of the moral universe; and to it angels come to study the divine administration. Here the immutable attributes are harmonized in the salvation of sinners guilty, and vile as devils. Here mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other; and a God who does not look upon sin, or behold iniquity, takes sinners to his bosom and his heart.

We have no particulars of the conversation: no words are reported; but doubtless these glorified and happy spirits emphasized the fact; that their glory and their joy were the fruit of the prospective death of the son of God, as the whole church in the book of revelation does. This vicarious and atoning death declares the unpardonable nature of sin, the changeless law of God, and the justice, whose inflexible severity no creature fully apprehends. Its great object was not so much to show the mercy of God, as "to declare his righteousness," to write the law again in the blood of Christ. By the cross of Christ the law is more loudly proclaimed, and its sanctions more terribly enforced, than when it was uttered amid the thunderings and lightnings, and voices of Sinai. Though the souls of the disciples were overcome with mortal fear; yet they felt it was good to be there; for the cross of Christ reveals the truths which make men's hearts burn within them. The whole power of the holy word lies in the central truth; that "when we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

It is a strange fact, that the Jewish people did not to any extent look upon the bloody sacrifices of the altar as typifying the offering up of the Messiah for sin. The whole

teaching of the ritual of blood had been lost; and amid all the references to the foregoing prophecies found in Rabbinic lore, not one allusion occurs showing, that they apprehended the real meaning of the bloody sacrifices. No stronger evidence could be found to show the utter lifelessness, and cold formality of the Judasism of that day down to the present. The truth, illustrated by the transfiguration, is still the rock on which our salvation is to be built. As soon as we intelligently and cordially acknowledge the divinity, which gives the atoning work its value, we are members of the church then organized by this confession.

Then follows the strange and unexpected charge: "tell no man the vision; till the son of man be risen from the dead." It was not to be communicated even to their fellow disciples. Such reticence belonged to all his operations; and agrees; with the prediction of Isaiah: "he shall not strive nor cry neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets." A time should come to proclaim it; and he would wait that time. Such reserve, such modesty are unhuman, and un-earthly; but belong properly to his sphere and his claims. Perhaps the minds of the twelve were not at this stage open to the reception of all the truth communicated to the favored three. We must remember that among them was a traitor Judas, who could not be made privy to any of the mysteries of the Kingdom; a cold and doubting Thomas, who believed neither his own eyes nor ears; and others so slow to accept what did not concur with their own ideas; that Christ, who refused utterly "a sign" to the cavaliers outside, wisely commanded: "tell no man the vision."

CHAPTER XIX.

JESUS WALKING ON THE SEA.

The events recited in Jno. vi showed that Jesus possessed unlimited control of all the departments of nature; and that these are governed not by fixed and unalterable laws; but by his supreme will, of which these laws are the expression. The force, that sustains all things, and prescribes the method of their changes, centred in him; and abides in him still. "By him all things consist," and are upheld by the word of his power. No purely creative act, producing matter from nothing, may have taken place since that mentioned in the first verse of Genesis: when God brought into being the heavens and the earth and all that in them is.

He formed Adam out of materials already existing; as he had brought into life all previous occupants of the globe from the dust of the earth. Every original atom created was labeled and numbered and stored, ready to enter some organism, when moulded into the desired form. So when Jesus restored a limb or an eye; while there may have been no creation from nothing; the needed atoms gathered at his will, arranged themselves as though instinct with life, and took form at his word. Such a restoration was a creation in the same sense in which it is said that Adam was created: and so was the multiplication of the loaves, when he fed the multitude near Bethsaida. From air and soil the needed particles rushed into shape, and added themselves to what he held in his hand. All was done under a direction and supervision to which God alone is competent.

So when he walked upon the sea, he did not accomplish the feat by the levitation of his human body, nor by changing the qualities of the water, as the experiment of Peter incontrovertibly showed: but he did it as the Lord of

nature, while all the essential properties of matter remained unchanged. As long as Peter kept his eye on him and believed, he upheld him: when he turned away his look and his faith, Christ immediately relinquished him, and he began to sink. The sea is his servant: and he can plant a sycamine tree in its quivering waters; so that it shall stand as stable as though rooted on the mountain side. Impossibles are possible to him; and nature in all its departments hastens to his slightest wish. She knew her Lord, though robed in the disguise of humanity, as did angels and devils: man alone failed to recognize him.

In the two accounts of feeding a multitude from a supply for one, a glimpse is obtained of the intense interest felt in the teachings of the Nazarene. Hearers came from far and continued without food: so that they could hardly return without fainting in the way. For the three days the Master was as destitute as they; but hunger was forgotten in his zeal for the instruction of willing listeners. A more orderly crowd never gathered, yielding implicit obedience to his directions with an almost military precision. One voice alone was heard, one will obeyed, and all were present for one purpose of receiving the teaching and the teacher. None had come to communicate with friends, or to spend an idle day.

The very presence of the Nazarene banished levity, and dwarfed all earthly concerns; while divine claims and unseen realities assumed their just proportion. The eagerness of the audience roused his deep compassion, which was expressed in works of healing, and words of love, and other visible ways not mentioned by the evangelists, who noted that their Master was deeply moved. His divine yearnings gave force to every uttered word.

The most affecting incident of the whole transaction was his giving of thanks. He took the loaves in his hand, and looked up to heaven, and "gave thanks," which he could only do as man, and, as Mark tells us, "blessed them" which was an act divine. Such human weakness mingled with divine majesty uttered the solemn invocation; that, as John tells us, ch. xv: 23, his words sank deep into the heart of everyone that heard, and rooted in his memory.

This introduced and hallowed the meal, the sweetest of which those present ever partook: though it consisted only of the coarsest bread and dried fish. He could as easily have furnished the choicest dainties and wines: but no king ever spread his table with a more welcome and better relished repast. How strangely does the command sound from one of resources so unlimited: "gather up the fragments that remain; that nothing be lost!" The broken crusts and fragments of fish doubtless supplied many a homely meal to the master and his family. John the Baptist was not more simple and austere in his tastes. Appetite never governed him, though taunted as "a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber."

The supply was limited only by the number present: and would have sufficed for the whole congregation in the wilderness: and suggested at once the presence of a leader equal to Moses, if not superior. In some respects the supply surpassed the miracle in the wilderness: and recalled it to mind most vividly. The impression made by it was intense: it placed our Lord at the zenith of his popularity. The heart of the nation responded to whatever indicated the presence of a deliverer. It is the only miracle related by all of the four evangelists: because it was the crisis of the Savior's ministry. His path had been upward until this summit was reached: now it descended abruptly to the valley of death-shade. The rulers had long before ranged themselves in opposition: now the people "turned away, as it were, their faces from him." To the eyes of a suffering nation he was "without form or comeliness: and had no beauty, wherefore they should desire him."

The proposal was freely made and eagerly accepted to take him by force and make him King, notwithstanding his well understood repugnance to the position. In this movement the twelve were keenly enlisted as advisers and promoters. Judas Iscariot was foremost in urging it, and in the subsequent murmuring: as was perhaps his associate Simon Zelotes. That the disciples were very active in advocating it can be gathered from the fact, that the Master found it necessary to send them away, before he could dismiss the multitude. The exercise of authority was re-

quired in order to accomplish this. Their own ship was the only one present at the time; and into this he *compelled* them to embark, and depart for the other side of the lake. They departed demurring, but obedient. So rapidly had the report of the intended measure spread among that susceptible people, that several ships, full of eager visitors ready for a demonstration, arrived during the evening; the wind being favorable for the passage. They found the disciples, the prime agitators in the proposed movement, absent, and the multitudes melting away; though adhering still to their fixed purpose definitely formed.

The nation was ripe for just the meditated step, which not only commended itself, but suggested itself to the judgment of all simultaneously. The disciples were good judges of what the times demanded, and the temper of the people would sustain. Had the nation been assembled in convention, the proposal would have been carried by acclamation. This temptation of the kingdom had been presented to Jesus before, and had been most energetically refused, at the commencement of his career; when the hand of Satan offered the crown.

For this cause came he into the world to be a king; and he was seeking a throne: but not a throne of earthly state. The groaning nation repeated the great temptation of the wilderness: in its extremity it added its call to the voice of the tempter. The virgin, the daughter of Zion was sitting in the dust, as in the days of Jeremiah; the yoke which her transgressions had wreathed, was on her neck; she spread out her hands; and there was none to comfort her; her eyes had failed in looking for her vain help; and now she turned to Jesus. "The Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger: he hath spread a net for my feet: he hath delivered me into their hands, from whom I am not able to rise up," was the dirge in every synagogue. The call certainly added force to the suggestion of Satan; and invited David's son and heir to restore the throne of David.

The movement begun at Bethsaida would have speedily become a general popular movement: had not our Lord

effectually checked it at once. The disciples utterly failed to see the true relation of the parties, until the great catastrophe demonstrated, that the real feeling toward their master was one of hostility to the death. To this same people Pilate said at the last, "behold your king," and the response was, "away with him; crucify him." Our Lord could never be deceived by the profession of pretended loyalty. There is a throne which, if humbly offered to him, he will never refuse: that of the humble and contrite heart, dear to him as the throne of universal dominion. Fire and water can more easily unite and live together in harmony and peace, than Christ and a people dead in their trespasses and sins.

Having sent away the disciples, and dismissed the multitude, he went up into a mountain apart to pray, from whose lofty heights the sea lay spread out before him in the bright moonlight, with the ship that carried his church struggling along its toilsome passage. His object was to teach his dispirited followers, and through them the ages a much needed lesson, by a night of parable and of wonders. It was his custom to teach by object lessons, and to illustrate and emphasize by miracle what he had communicated in words. An instance is the withering of the barren fig-tree, as a tangible warning to the fruitless nation. When Christ abandons, the vital sap ceases its flow instantly, the spirit of God is withdrawn, and a heart withering, the prelude of doom comes on. What are the mangled and broken bread of the eucharist and the wine poured out in a big stream, but an object lesson, enabling us to see through them a glimpse of his sufferings? How did he teach humility? With a little child pressed to his bosom, or with the basin and towel of a servant of the lowest grade about his loins.

In like manner on this remarkable night he was impressing upon the disciples, that the course of the church, like that of the ship that bore them, was not to be smooth and easy. The wind was fierce and directly contrary, and the waves ran high and threatening: and no advance was possible except by vigorous use of the oars, and continuous exertion, the intermission of which for a moment, lost the

thought. "Lord," said he, "if it be thou, bid me come unto thee upon the water." This sounds like a big boy anxious to try some novel and daring adventure. The Savior permitted it in order to teach him a great and useful lesson. Peter had no thought but of the odd and unheard of experiment: Jesus would inculcate a lesson, which might in time mould his life, and prepare him for future leadership. "Come," said he, and the command implied a promise of support. Every command contains assurance of the aid necessary for its accomplishment. And Peter stepped out boldly, and, abandoning the support of the ship, "walked on the water to go to Jesus." Having left his base and ventured out, "he saw the wind boisterous and was afraid," realizing his risk. As long as he saw Jesus only and confided in his word, he walked safely; but when he surrendered his attention to the obstacles and dangers, he began to sink; and giving way to them, he would have perished, if the Lord had not caught him, with the rebuke: "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Had he continued to confide, no storm could have overcome him.

The time came when this was a most profitable lesson to Peter, and to others. At a period when the sea of human passion raged, and the winds of diabolism blew with tenfold fury, he as well as the other apostles were able to walk upon the waves. On the day of Pentecost they received the power through faith to look above all the turmoil of the elements: to hear nothing but the command of Christ: not only to face the frowning world, but "tread upon the lion and adder, and trample the young lion and the dragon under their feet." The boldness of Christian faith is more sublime than the mere physical courage of the warrior. When the enemies saw this superhuman boldness, the sight brought vividly back to memory its most illustrious example, the Nazarene teacher.

Never was the wicked world more excited by hatred of God and his gospel; and never were men more worthy of the designation "more than conquerors." The enemies "threatened them," "scourged them," and "put them in the common prison;" but there was but one sight before

their eyes, their blessed Master ascending and saying: "Lo I am with you always, even to the end." One scene was indelibly painted on memory's tablets: one voice sounded in their souls; they saw nothing else, heard nothing beside. Faith trusts and obeys. This was a useful lesson, not merely to the apostles, but to believers of all times.

The church may meet with little opposition now: but it may be because the present is an age of toleration and compromise. When the church shall become "terrible as an army with banners," the world will also show its colors. Whenever the church is in its normal condition, which we call a state of revival, which should be not its occasional but its constant condition: more or less opposition is manifested; according as the church is more or less aggressive. It is by no means dead but sleeping; while upon the other side there is no sleeping, no inactivity, no decay of zeal. Faith alone can render the church victorious. Not only was its first establishment accomplished by men, whose one singular distinction was their perfect faith: every advance has been conducted by leaders of the same stamp. Luther is an illustration of the same spirit, as are the hundreds who in the times of trial have confirmed their testimony by their blood.

With Christ in the vessel, "immediately it was at the land whither they went." The disciples were so animated and elevated by the presence of the master, that they were hardly sensible of the lapse of time. The opposition of the wind and sea was no longer regarded: the voyage was accomplished before the fervor of their surprise and exhilaration had known abatement. The ship itself seemed almost to walk the water. It had truly been a night of wonders, and also of great discoveries. Our Lord seems often to have selected the night season for the most remarkable revelations, which he made of himself. When he comes to his church still through a night of tempest, his presence brings joy and victory: the powers of evil are smitten before him; bleeding hearts receive the oil of joy; bruised reeds are strengthened; the smoking flax kindles into a flame of love and hope: and an impulse heavenward is felt generally. When his cause makes its final conquest of the world, it

will be not by might nor by power, but by the presence of the king. The discourse of the next day in the synagogue of Capernaum shows how easily he could cool the ardor of his mercenary supporters, who desired to make him the active promoter of their own worldly schemes. They forgot their desire to make him king; closed their synagogues against him; and no longer followed him in crowds in Galilee. The nation would give no serious attention to any possible Messiah, whose prime object was not the deliverance of Israel from subjection to the great Gentile power.

But a brief interval of a few days elapsed, until he received at Cesarea Philippi the confession of the twelve of the bottom conviction of their souls; that though the people had deserted him, and the rulers had placed themselves in determined opposition, yet they knew him to be the Christ, the son of the living God; and would adhere to their convictions against the united world. He had indeed lost the sanction of the nation; but he had gained a faithful few, who beheld enshrined within the temple of his humanity, a heavenly presence. While the bulk of the people saw and perceived not, heard and understood not, there was a small number that appreciated his real standing and personality. The sifting of the mass left a few precious grains of good seed. In his final prayer the result is concisely stated: "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee; but I have known thee; and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it."

CHAPTER XX.

THE LUNATIC BOY AT THE MOUNT OF TRANSFIGURATION.

Great obscurity rests upon the whole subject of demoniacal possession, which may never be entirely relieved. The question ever arises, is there anything of the kind in our day? Can we judge by any present phenomena, about the malady so frequently mentioned in the gospels? or was Satan allowed larger liberty then; in order that the superiority of the Redeemer might be more conclusively demonstrated by his continual victory over him? It was at the time generally admitted that the casting out of demons was one of his mightiest works. It is impossible to deny the reality of these possessions in that day, as we have in the gospels a divinely true account of them. These demons were not the spirits of departed men; as the scriptures afford no evidence whatever, that the spirits of men righteous or wicked are ever permitted to revisit this earth. The examples of Samuel and Moses and Elias are exceptional. These demon spirits were of another order than human.

That the evangelists are speaking of actual spirits, and not of personified diseases is evident from the history of the first exorcism, which took place in the synagogue of Capernaum; in which case Luke, himself an intelligent physician, tells us that at the command of Jesus the devil came out of the man, "and hurt him not;" an expression that could not be made concerning a disease. The devil seemingly had the ability to throw the subject in the midst, and otherwise to injure him; had not a superior power prevented. The superhuman sagacity of the afflicted man, in penetrating the disguise of our Savior's humanity, and declaring his true individuality, argues a more

than mortal insight. At the time such an opinion of the Nazarene was hardly entertained except by the Baptist and very few, perhaps by none beside.

In forming a judgment concerning these terrible afflictions, all must agree that they could not take place under the administration of the Holy God, against the will of the subject. These individuals suffering in this manner must have lost control of themselves, as the insane; or have never possessed self-control, as the idiotic or feeble-minded; or were persons destitute of one or more of the five senses. Such, being looked upon as "altogether born in sins," may have been treated with such unvarying harshness, as to lead them easily to surrender themselves to diabolical influence. At all events it must be received as an axiom, that God would never subject a creature to the dominion of infernal spirits by his own dispensation. Devils may have usurped the command of such as no longer had the power of resistance; and it may be conceded that such possession may exist in isolated cases in every age, without any reflection upon the character of Jehovah. It is a comfortable conviction, that the subjects of this distressing ailment were such as have been named.

This possession was something additional to the insanity or idiocy; and was sometimes complicated with bodily disease, as in the case under consideration. The epilepsy had been congenital, and had affected and weakened the mind, until there was no longer self-command; and the possession supervened. The patient was lunatic, or his malady was periodical. All periodicity tallies with the motions of the moon and the length of a lunar revolution. Even winds and rains largely conform to this arrangement, and many diseases. The ague of the malarious districts of our own country, though never suspected of a connection with the moon; however thoroughly broken and checked, shows a tendency to recur the fourteenth day. Such was the case with this lunatic boy.

The description, which the father gives of him, is the most pathetic that can be conveyed in human language. No calamity could be more dire or grievous; and we hear the unutterable compassion of a parent in his words. The boy

was his only son and only child; and should have been the hope and stay of his parents in their age; but he had been, and was ever to be, an object of ceaseless anxiety, and continual supervision. He had been kept more watchfully than a helpless infant to the present hour; and his condition cast a deep shadow over their whole future.

The father had long heard of the mighty works of the Nazarene, and possessed a degree of faith in his Messiahship. He improved the opportunity of his presence near at hand, in this northern extremity of the land, to bring his son to him for healing; but arriving, found the Master absent; and the disciples unapprized of the place in which he was, and of the hour of his return. As the apostles had publicly received power to cast out devils, and perform the other works of cure wrought by the Master, the applicant appealed to them for relief. But though they had cast out devils, and done many wonderful works in the name of Jesus: yet to them he appealed in vain: their prayers and commands were ineffectual. As our Lord afterwards explained to them, the cause of their failure was unbelief. The healing power did not abide in them: but in him: and when their connection with him was broken by unbelief, their power was gone. The cause of their present want of confidence may have been two-fold.

1. The Master's emphatic predictions of his own arrest, condemnation and death, at the hands of his enemies, had actually weakened their belief of his Messiahship. He had refrained from announcing this fearful denouement in his earlier teachings, except very occasionally. He had been waiting for them to become immovably settled in their convictions, that he was the Christ of God; before he communicated to them the ignominious end to which his ministry was coming. He had afforded them every opportunity of knowledge, made them eye-witnesses of his works, hearers of his teachings, and companions of his secluded hours; until, by their own confession, they were firm in their belief that he was the coming one, whom the ages had been expecting: and when they had attained to a certainty respecting his personality: then and not before he had revealed to them the coming death. Thenceforward this was

almost his sole theme: he emphasized, and repeated and reiterated this one thing, and dwelt upon it in every variety of inculcation. All had refused, like Peter, to entertain the idea, and they had never heard him so stern and overwhelming in rebuke, for their not receiving his words, as in this instance.

They were in this very attitude of mind at this present: the view of the agonizing, shameful end, actually introduced into their souls a doubt of his being what they had understood him to be, and what himself claimed to be. They were balancing in their minds whether he could be put to death, and yet be the Christ. A state of doubt about matters of vital importance is the most horrid condition in which men ever find themselves: and this was just their posture. Not that they meditated the abandonment of the Master: but their faith had encountered a rude shock, and it was staggered for a time.

2. Another cause of their unbelief was listening to the subtle questionings of the scribes, who were ready to improve every sign of defeat with remorseless persistency. Sceptics possess what the French call *la maladie de question*. Asking questions interminably is a disease. Believing that the Nazarene prophet was a partner with Beelzebub, they could ask more questions in a breath, than could be answered in a day. Confidence in their Master once wavering, could never be restored by listening to the quibbles of gainsayers: but the scribes probably had the attention of the crowd: and for a time were masters of the situation.

During the contest, a throng of curious and keen observers had surrounded them, eager to catch every word: now applauding some quibble of the scribes, and again some rejoinder of the disciples. Their interest at length slackened, however, as it became more evident that the disciples were unable to relieve the lad. The expectation of beholding a miracle, which had concentrated the multitude, having failed, the crowd was falling to pieces. Defeat was patent and acknowledged: and the company losing its cohesiveness was scattering.

At this juncture, the Master appeared, emerging from some forest or ravine, through which he was descending the mountain. The opportuneness of his arrival, at the very moment when his presence was demanded, produced a deep impression; as though while absent he had been aware of all that had been passing, and had timed his movements to suit the circumstances exactly. Had he appeared earlier, the deficiency of the disciples had not been revealed; had he waited longer, an opportunity had been lost.

His return was greeted with enthusiasm; and as he approached, the multitude ran towards him, and instinctively did reverence. Bowing to the earth before him, every voice was hushed; and as they looked, the stillness of awe was upon all; and the solemnity of the unseen gathered over them. When he asked of the scribes: "What question ye with them?" none could answer. The disciples were dumb, as being weighed in the balances and found wanting. We are at a loss to account for the spell which his presence produced. Never was a crowd disorderly before him; never were gibes and ribaldry, the constant accompaniment of large promiscuous gatherings, rife where he was; jeers and laughter subsided at once before him; and the people became as orderly as when in the temple.

It may be that the occurrences of the night past, when "his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem," had been vividly brought before him, had lent a sadder, tenderer, diviner majesty to his countenance; and the prospect of the resultant glory was stamping itself upon his person. He had been reënacting the covenant made with the Father before the world was. His heart was burning with a fire which waters could not quench, nor floods drown. He had given himself anew for the salvation of sinners. This consecration elevated him higher, than the eternal throne could do. The stamp was perhaps upon his features, and gave them their illumination. After a considerable pause, which none were bold enough to break, the father of whom we have spoken, unattended by his son, whom force alone could bring into the Master's presence, came and kneeled before him, as recognizing the divine in him, and said: "Master, I have brought unto thee my son,

which hath a dumb spirit: and wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out, and they could not."

The evidence of the presence of a malign spirit with the lad was found in the selection of the moments for the attack of his disease. They seem to have been chosen with a purpose of self-destruction. The patient, probably having some forewarning of the approach of the fit, hastened to place himself where, falling, he would be in jeopardy of his life. The demoniac agency was demonstrated more clearly by the boy's voluntary and persistent dumbness. Having the organs of hearing and speech in normal condition, he utterly refused to make use of them: and so had lapsed into a state of stupidity, which made his life but little superior to that of some low order of brutes.

The constant vigilance, demanded for the preservation of his life, was not so wearing as the parental yearning over the sad condition of an only child. The Savior's reply to the sorrowful tale was not hasty and petulant, as the words would indicate if coming from the lips of a man. "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you?" They were evidently uttered in view of the unbelief of the disciples primarily. They had, by their own confession, seen enough to convince them, that their Master was the Christ of God. All doubt of it had been dispelled by incontrovertible proof. Yesterday they had been standing as pillars of rock: now they were as reeds shaken by the wind.

The Master's words were words of just and merited reproof, appropriate to all who listened; and were not wasted upon this waiting applicant. The holy leader was deeply grieved by the prevailing unbelief. It may be imagined also, that after the night of heavenly elevation, the discord of earthly questionings had a peculiarly grating effect. There was a measureless descent from the summit of eternal glory down to the dark shades of ignorance and unbelief. He was not impatient; he was not tiring of his undertaking, nor abandoning it; but mourning over human instability, and its readiness of defection.

“Bring him unto me,” was the command given to the father, who immediately attempted the task, which could be accomplished by superior strength only; and when the reluctant, resisting boy obtained the first view of his deliverer, he was at once seized with the most violent spasm of his whole affliction. The sight of Jesus was the signal for the child to fall, and tear himself with his own teeth and nails, and against every obstruction that was in his way. He “lay upon the ground, and wallowed foaming,” disclosing thus the nature of the diabolical influence, which held possession of him. Every beholder became aware of the presence of an unseen, malignant power in full sway, and raging against outside interference; while the sympathies of all present were deeply moved at the spectacle.

Jesus, in the meantime, stood as a cool observer of the whole proceeding, manifesting only the interest of a stranger; and as an ordinary spectator, asked for information, which he already possessed, in order that the father, in reciting the sad facts of the case, and feeling the hopeless misery of the situation, might be assisted thereby to the exercise of the necessary faith. After giving the mournful history, his appeal is very touching: “If *thou* canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.” But the Savior, with all his plentitude of power, moves not: he is in no haste to save: he waits, until the application is made with full dependence on him, and with real trust. “The eyes of the Lord run to and fro through all the earth, to show himself strong in behalf of those whose heart is perfect toward him.” In due time our Lord replied: and his reply was as though he had said, “If:” don’t put your “if” to me, as though it were doubtful whether my ability is sufficient: put the if where it really belongs: “*if* thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.” All things are possible to me, and my power is enlisted for him who believes.

Faith is confidence not for some particular blessing; but confidence in a person: and Christ thus suspends his aid upon the condition of this trust in himself: a belief that he is able, and that he will do what is best in the case. When he pronounced the perfect cure possible, and connected it

with, and made it dependent on the faith of the father; the entire decision of the case was devolved upon that father. Faith is the highest tribute which a creature can render; and a full and perfect faith can be reposed in God only.

Who is this, who requires faith in himself for "all things" as possible to him as to God? who declares that mountains will be removed by him out of regard to it, even the snowy Hermon? Who is this who claims what God alone can claim; and offers to perform what God alone can effect? As a little, helpless child cannot more surely enlist a parent's efforts in his behalf than by fleeing to him when in want or danger; so faith brings God instantly to our help. All the boundless attributes of the deity are engaged for those who trust in him; and who or what can be against them? God is their's.

Faith then of course looks up to Christ as God; it places him on the throne of the universe, and invests him with all power in heaven and earth: it hears his divine word, and rests upon it with a full and unquestioning repose. The loftiest seraph in the skies in his burning worship does not make a higher ascription to God, than does the humble sinner, who trusts in Christ on earth.

This father had a degree of faith in Jesus, sufficient to induce him to make application to him as divine. Our Lord had not been in this region before; but the fame of his mighty works had penetrated to the remotest corner of the land; and of all his miracles the expulsion of devils was generally considered the most remarkable; and the reports of it were widely disseminated. When there is but one helper in the universe, our attention is directed to that one with intensity: and is not distracted by expectations from any other. This man was compelled to look to Jesus alone, and was aware, that all depended on his own faith; but he had great reasons for discouragement, in the failure of the disciples, who seem never before to have met with defeat in such a case. He must likewise have been much depressed by the subtleties of the mocking, blaspheming scribes. Such suggestions revive the unbelieving questions of our own hearts, to which it is dangerous to listen at all.

Another reason of distrust could be found in the aggravated condition of the boy; who as yet had been nothing bettered, but rather made worse. The great cause of discouragement, however, was the nature of the malady itself, which would ordinarily forbid all hope. This epilepsy had attached to him "of a child." Life-long ailments are too deeply fixed for cure; and are invincible except by a power superior to nature. Rooted in the constitution, fixed in established habit, they defy removal. All these discouragements presented themselves to him and pressed him sore. He felt their full force, and a terrible conflict shook his soul. His desire for the relief of his boy amounted to an agony. He also felt that Jesus had laid the entire responsibility upon his own agency. While with all his heart he desired to trust, the shifting sands of unbelief were under his feet, the suggestions of the enemy were in his ears, and his heart trembled at the fear of losing his only opportunity of deliverance for himself, and for his child.

In this dire extremity what does he do? He stands to all time as an example of a timid, wavering, yet victorious faith. Taking the largest interpretation of the words of Jesus, that "all things are possible" at his word, that he possessed power over devils, disease and death, and also over the hearts of men, he casts himself entirely upon Christ, saying, as it were, all power is thine; do all for me; speak faith into me, and life into my son; cast out the devil of unbelief from me, and the demon from the child; do all the work and have all the glory. His appeal was made with flowing tears and a breaking heart. Thou makest the light; and also the eye fitted to receive God's light; thou puttest the desired good within our reach, and givest us the hand with which to grasp it; thou not only providest us the necessary food, but givest us the organs to receive and appropriate it. Jesus delights to do the whole work in every healing; he waits until all other helpers fail, and expectation from every other source is cut off; till Peter is sinking in the waves. He suffers no partner to divide the glory. In his works he is alone. "I stretch out the heavens by myself;" "of the people there was none with me." He saves; he does not help save,

The prayer of this man remains as a model to all succeeding ages: "Lord I believe; help thou my unbelief." I must, I will. Help me to say, I can, I do believe." This is the opportunity for which the great helper is waiting. "He is exalted to give repentance," as well as "remission of sins." He gives "every grace, that brings us nigh." An appeal to him is never fruitless: no beggar was ever turned away empty from his door. The Savior was waiting for this request, and immediately commanded the possessing demon out and forever out.

All the ordinary works of our Lord were performed instantly, except the expulsion of demons. In those cases there was always delay. In the present exorcism the final spasm, attended with a piercing cry, was seemingly fatal. The bystanders said, "he is dead;" so violent was the paroxysm, and so motionless and quiet lay the lad, and for so long a time. But Jesus took him by the hand, and he arose: and was free from the dreadful possession, and so continued to the end of life. Considering these last phenomena, the conviction is unavoidable that a real power, of intense malignity and rebellion, was in this case contending against him, who came to destroy the works of the devil. Whether such cases yet exist, is not so easily decided. This boy, always before a burden of anxiety to friends, became a comfort and a joy: his life, before worse than a blank, became bright with promise and full of hope.

It is interesting to remark how ready Jesus was to hear the application of parents for their children, and of friends for those dear to them. Such histories abound in the gospels. This lad was incapable of making application for himself, and more indisposed than unable; but in his father he had a friend to whom he was dear as life. Jesus looked for no petition from the boy, and demanded of him no faith. He knew a father's pity: it was like his own. It is a spark of the mighty flame in his own breast. He is a Father, and those who come to him are his little children.

Intercession is a work kindred to his own great undertaking. It may possibly be said with truth: that he was more ready to listen to such applications than to others. Certain it is that none such failed of success: and that he

contrived to meet such, and put himself in their way as though hastening to a coveted appointment: and showed himself more eager to meet them, than they were to find him; frequently making long circuits to accomplish his purpose of mercy, as in this very case.

When the discomfited disciples asked of the Savior in private "why could not we cast him out?" he intimated to them, that while the malignant spirit in this instance was of an intractable class; yet a clear and lively faith would have surely been victorious in this, as in every other conflict; and that this faith, once wavering or lost, could be regained only by prayer and fasting. The most profound humiliation and the deepest agony of desire will always bring from above an increase of faith, and an access of divine strength to the soul, of which the father in this history stands an impressive example. The most staunch believer needs a frequent renewal of his trust during the trying vicissitudes of life; and entrance upon new and arduous duties requires new and additional equipment of spiritual strength, for their discharge without failure.

The day appears to have been considerably advanced, when our Lord came down from the mount of transfiguration: showing that the memorable scene, which had there transpired, had occupied the greater part of the night. The brief account left us is but a faint sketch of the only glimmer of glory let down from the skies upon the pathway of the man of sorrows. Himself needed no such revelation for his own personal assurance, it was vouchsafed for the instruction and strengthening of the disciples in their condition of overwhelming perplexity and doubt, stunned as they were by the emphatic announcement of the mournful termination of their master's career. That the sun, which had arisen so gloriously, should set in blood, staggered their faith, agonized their hearts, and disappointed their hopes. It is not easy for us to appreciate their revulsion of feeling from the heights of the most sanguine anticipation, to the horrors of the rejection and the crucifixion. That their faith was sorely tried is evident, and that they had not adjusted themselves to the new view of the outcome, and indeed could not receive it, nor did they accept it, until the full blaze of gospel glory shone into their souls.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE PENITENT HARLOT. LUKE VII. 36.

This woman has long been confounded with Mary Magdalene, whose name occurs for the first time, immediately after this history. Magdala also was in the near vicinity of Nain, where Jesus was at the last mention. Both are spoken of as being eminent examples of a tender love for the Master, excelling ordinary believers in the effusiveness and strength of their affection. While in the cases thus far there is a similarity, there seems no real scriptural authority for identifying them as the same individual, unless the description of the Magdalene, "out of whom went seven devils," be understood as spoken figuratively. Jesus, in another passage, has thus described the person who is given up of God. He is himself using figurative language when he says: "Then goeth he and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first." If these words afford the clue to the interpretation of the description of the Magdalene, she may have been this woman, possessed by the grossest and most bestial of lusts: as by indwelling demons within sight and hearing of perdition: rescued by Jesus from the lowest pit of evil on earth.

No deeper debasement can be conceived than that of the female, who yields herself to the gratification of the fiercest and most brutal lusts of the other sex. She becomes a devil indeed, and worse than the men she serves. No crime is too heinous for her conscience. Her hands grapple those that yield to her as with hooks of steel; and she becomes the devil's tongs by which he seizes his prey; to put them into the burning furnace of perdition, where the breath of God's anger is the blast. "Her house is the way to hell:

none that go unto her ever return." The man that ventures finds himself like the fly in the spider's web; entangled with influences from which there is no escape. Those, whom God abandons, are "given up to these vile affections; as is thrice stated in the first chapter of Romans. Ordinarily there remains for such no room for repentance, and no hope.

This woman was not only one of those who never return; but she had gone the full length; guilty of sins which in woman, the world never forgives. She had been devoted to the perdition of souls; endowed with beauty to attract, and fascinations to beguile and bind her victims. Once she was the fond delight of doting parents and friends, filling a home with her sweet music, enlivening gloom by the sunlight of her presence, and driving away care by her buoyancy, a comfort and a joy to all interested in her. Over her hearts had throbbed; and for her prayers had ascended. Oh what a fall from the heights of innocence into the mire of pollution, to become an agent of Satan for destruction! Earth has no name foul enough for the ministers of hell, male and female; but among them the woman takes the precedence; as she descends to the deepest infamy; and caters most terribly to evil. Her very person is contagion, and her mission is the damnation of others.

If ever a sane human being can be said to be possessed of seven devils, she merits the description. Life is a burden; but death has terrors too fearful to be courted. Every breath is drawn in a sense of unfitness to live. The world scorns her, the innocent flee from her, friends disown her, heaven condemns her, the devil possesses her, the blackness of darkness envelops her, and all influences for good have ceased. If there is a hopeless case on earth it is the case of such a one. Jesus Christ can forgive where men never condone, where the world refuses pity even. An outcast from all the compassions of men is not beyond the reach of the mercy of Jesus Christ. He selected this very case to exhibit the greatness of his grace.

1. Sinners of all classes were wonderfully affected by the presence of Jesus: like the demoniac they could not keep away from him. "Then drew near unto him all the pub-

licans and sinners for to hear him," while the Scribes and Pharisees stood aloof and murmured. They were attracted as the famishing are to the prospects of food, or the thirsty to the fountain. They felt that in him was something, that answered to the deep necessities of their spiritual nature: and promised a supply to their acknowledged want. It was no magic or imposture that attracted: it was simply what he was. It may have been hard for them to give account or reason for their irresistible attraction; but the fact remained. To the very centre of their being they were shaken by contact with him: and no other influence in the wide world could so move them. Not only the gross and hardened malefactor that died at his side, not only the debased and abandoned woman of this sketch: but the men of the highest culture and most advanced civilization, and nicest sensibility like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, felt. The close-fisted, hard-hearted Zaccheus and the ignorant woman of Sychar alike responded to the touch of his personality. At sight of him every one felt that there was a God of holiness, and heaven of purity. Few could endure the view of him, because it set home to their hearts a sense of sin.

The fable that the beasts of the field did reverence to him as he was being conveyed to Egypt, and that the palm-trees bowed to him their lofty fruit, was more than realized in the fact that the hearts of men bowed to him, and were stirred to their depth at his presence. Diseases, devils and death knew their Lord; and equally did the souls of his own creation throb with an involuntary recognition. The sight of a perfect and more than celestial purity left no spectators indifferent. Those who were wounded with a sense of sin, could no more keep away from Jesus of Nazareth than the planets can break from their attachment to the sun; than the rivers can stay in their rush to the sea. Multitudes were ready to forsake all for him; and those who did not welcome his presence, were just as far from indifference and were as much excited, but to hatred and opposition.

2. She had correct views of Christ: she had caught a glimpse of his ineffable purity: not only stainless, but incapable of stain. He was in the likeness of sinful flesh, but

separate from sinners farther than heaven is from earth. His immaculate excellence was superangelic. It was the uncreated lustre of divine beauty. In the words of Daniel, he was "the Holy of Holies." Evil could never penetrate within the veil of his sanctity. Therefore he was just what he professed to be, and what his works declared him to be. The miracle just wrought in Nain proclaimed him "the resurrection and the life." When he so calmly appealed to God as father, and spoke of himself as the only begotten son, she unhesitatingly admitted the claim with all its consequences. With her, all was intuition, without process of logic; she saw and felt. To her, he was the incarnate glory; the light of the world, the light of the soul, the physician of the heart, the shepherd seeking his lost ones. Henceforth her life was to be inseparable from him. This was not matter of reasoning; the demands of her being required it. She could more easily cease to live, than tear herself from him.

She was in the Pharisee's house by sufferance, being well aware that the pollution of her presence could never have been allowed, except on that day when Simon kept open house; knowing it to be impossible to repress the crowd that followed him whom he entertained. She had stood for a time with bowed head in speechless sorrow at the feet of Jesus, behind him as he lay at the table; unworthy to speak her desire, or call his attention to herself; and had soon knelt over them, to be better out of sight of eyes that loathed her; shed an agony of tears in full shower upon those sacred feet, which she wiped with the hairs of her head, anointing them with the ointment which had been an accompaniment of her sinful life. With inward groans and mute breakings of heart, she continued as though her head were waters, and her eyes fountains of tears. Before her mind were passing in long array the remembrances of early life and religious teaching, followed by the hideous spectres of her subsequent history; of the evil done to her by her own consent, and the evil she had done to others. A court had been instituted in her bosom; and the judgment of God was issuing against her.

There are times when the judgment within is as righteous, and as certain, and as terrible as at the great assize of eternity; and thus it was with her. Her appalling guilt was being written by the finger of doom upon the walls of memory; and all the scenes of her life rose with fearful distinctness, to declare her not only outcast from earth, but from heaven. To him she clung; for she felt that in him was mercy and hope for her; clung as the drowning man does to the plank.

3. We cannot but be struck by the modesty, propriety and good taste displayed in the whole conduct of this woman, in what must have been to her the most trying position. Indeed a real and unfeigned humility is the parent of ease, propriety and grace of behavior in the most embarrassing circumstances; as well as the brightest ornament of the spirit in God's sight. She suffered herself to be spoken of and treated as a great sinner and most unworthy person, without manifesting the least resentment. He that can accept a harsh judgment against himself without offence, is "humble under the mighty hand of God." All the world's condemnation of her was not as severe as her own condemnation of herself; the world's rejection was not as bitter as her own verdict against herself. Did man crush her to the lowest point, she could "rejoice in that she is made low;" and place herself still lower before God. She can hear condemnation without a murmur, while her own heart echoes it with redoubled emphasis: without an attempt to throw off blame upon others. She kneels behind the Savior as a sinner unworthy to attract his eye, and slinks as far as possible out of sight, that she may not intrude to the disgust of the host, or gain the attention of any at the table. She stifles her groans, and beyond the reach of observation pours out her sorrows where none but he knows.

She is, as it were, alone with Jesus, unconscious as it were of the scrutiny of others, oblivious of all but his presence. Her only hope lay in the mysterious being with whom she was mutely pleading, resigned to his decision, approving his severest judgment, yet hoping for pardon and acceptance. Self is the idol in our souls which eclipses

God and our fellowmen: when this idol is thrown down we can do justice to both God and men. Humility puts God upon the throne, and esteems every man as better than ourselves.

We are then in our true position: and a deep and strange happiness arises in our hearts. If we weep for sin, a strange joy mingles with the tears: and there is healing in the waters of true repentance: if we look up to God it is to cast every crown at his feet: and to feel that he is "our exceeding joy:" if we look to our fellowmen it is to love them *as we love ourselves*. To produce this state of mind the severest agonies are necessary, the most crushing judgments of heaven, and the most terrible dealings of the Holy spirit: but when it once takes place: no sight is comparable in view of heaven with that of a sinner returning from his ways. Angels rejoice: Jesus Christ sees of the travail of his soul and is satisfied: and the great God "rejoices over them with singing." This woman was in the very crisis of the new birth: and was unconsciously hoping in the mercy of Jesus Christ. He declares that she had faith. Repentance and faith ever go together. True repentance is not remorse, conviction, horror: but love weeping over our ingratitude, and "loathing ourselves for our doings which were not good." It is not so much the weeping before pardon; as the tears which accompany it, and denote our loving grief for our offences against the Savior of our souls.

While this scene was progressing, the Pharisee looked on with scornful eyes. Not being a sinner, he knew nothing of his illustrious guest. He was debating in his own thoughts, whether he were a prophet at all, and coming to an adverse conclusion. If he were a prophet, he was saying to himself, he would know what manner of woman this is that toucheth him. Phariseeism, having no need of a Savior, knows him not: if it tolerate Jesus, it is only as a prophet: it cannot think of assigning him any higher office or function. He had invited Jesus to his house to dinner, but had not received him with that courtesy, which he would have shown to a common friend.

Jesus went where he was not treated with ordinary civility. The first need of a guest in that hot and dusty climate is water for his feet, his sandals having been left at the door. He is then welcomed with a kiss, and perfumed ointment is poured upon his head. All this had been studiously and coldly omitted in his case. Simon did not know his guest; but this outcast woman *did* know him. All his religious education and synagogue privilege, with the wonderful miracle wrought under his eyes, can impart no spiritual perception to a man who does not know that he is a sinner. Christ is seen only through a lens of tears. He that has no sins to wash away, no soul to save, has no room for Christ in the inn of his heart, or the creed of his understanding. The gospel is a telescope to show Christ in his glory and beauty; but the eye-piece is placed so low, that our eyes cannot be got in line, except as we are lying in the dust.

4. She had been forgiven freely. Like the chief debtor in the parable, which our Savior spoke, she had nothing to pay. Christ introduced it with a call to Simon: "I have something to say unto thee," something special and personal to thyself. And he said: "Master say on." Then follows the parable. In those days a creditor could imprison a debtor for life; or sell him, and if need be, his family into bondage; but this creditor frankly forgave the debt, demanding no consideration in return. After this manner was Christ's forgiveness of the erring woman. He took his pay in gratitude and love.

He is seeking those who are in the deepest and direst necessities, whose wants are of killing urgency, and granting them the greatest conceivable mercies, just to gain true love. He hungers for love, to be the object of the most intense and gushing affection; and he secures it by lavishing salvation upon the blackest children of perdition, who will love him more than angels can, with a love responsive to his own, and like it immeasurable. He is preparing those who will sing a song that angels cannot learn. This woman was forgiven not because she loved, but because she believed; and received salvation without money and without price. Here was a singer trained to warble a note

in the everlasting song, that will melt the soul of every listener, fill heaven with astonishment, and bring joy to him who redeemed it with blood, his own blood. How direct and personal is Jesus in every word! though uttered in divine kindness, each is a stab to the heart. "I entered into thy house, *thou* gavest me no water for my feet; but *she* has washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head: *thou* gavest me no kiss: but *this woman*, since the time I came in; hath not ceased to kiss my feet: my head with oil *thou* didst not anoint; but *this woman* hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins which are many are forgiven; for" or therefore, "she loved much." "Who is this that forgiveth sins also?" ran as a murmur through the hearts of all at the table, Simon's included; but there was one that knew that he had power on earth to forgive sins; that at his word spiritual health and joy visited the sin-sick soul; that its wounds were healed, and the pulse of heavenly life commenced to beat. She knew that he could not only call to life the corpse at the door of the sepulchre, but impart the new life of love and joy to the soul previously dead in tresspasses and sins. The same power attended that word that had accompanied the command to the young man at the funeral bier, to whom Jesus had said, "arise."

Our Savior repeated the assurance of forgiveness of sins, by a direct and positive announcement to the woman of the fact: that all might understand that the words were not inadvertently uttered; but that he deliberately assumed the right and the power, than which there is no higher. He thereby put himself into the very throne of God. The same faith secures cleansing as well as pardon. How many have asked the question,—can one so deeply dyed in the crimson hue of damnation, ever be cleansed? and the world unhesitatingly answers no. But "the blood of Jesus Christ, his son, cleanseth us from all sin."

Were the stain of every possible transgression known in all the annals of crime enstamped again and again, until the dye was deep as Satan's own; yet he can make the soul whiter than snow; snow has its impurities: God's cleansing leaves none. The soul is made pure as infancy.

There is a story of a beautiful piece of statuary exhumed from its hidden bed of centuries in the ruins of Rome; exquisite, but fouled with the stain of blood: and for its cleansing all applications and expedients have been tried, even to immersion in boiling water; but the foul blot was only deepened by each essay. The very pores of the marble had drunk the stain, until nothing short of the destruction of the relic could remove the blot. Such is the stain of sin penetrating through the pores of the soul, until every fibre is polluted; but the cleansing blood can make it clean and white as wool.

There is filth external to the body which water can remove; and there is an internal pollution, circulating in the blood, impregnating with its poison every portion of the system, breaking out in hideous ulcers: a leprosy vitiating by its presence every part of the structure, which no external application can remove. It is an internal impurity beyond the reach of outside purification: and sometimes bidding defiance to all remedies possible to human science: and promising a fatal termination. Such is sin deep in the very marrow of our bones, and all-pervading, all-poisoning, tending to spiritual destruction. "The blood of Christ cleanseth." Though the color be set in the very fabric of our humanity: he can make the crimson to be whiter than snow. We must remember that the gospel is "the power of God;" that it is "mighty through God:" that it is the exceeding greatness of his power."

He that can raise the decayed body after its dust has been dissipated for ages, can raise the soul to newness of life. God's omnipotence is not only physical, but moral: and his spiritual omnipotence far exceeds in glory. There are obligations, which he can press with the weight of eternity: there are motives, which he can make stronger than the forces which bind the universe together; through them he can breathe a joy to which the soul will hasten sweetly to yield. The soul of man is a breath of his own essence, and it can be purified even as he is pure. Whatever Christ undertakes, he is able to accomplish. Let us not look at the feeble humanity, which is but as clay in the hands of the potter; let us look at the mighty Savior.

Though she be not only a bruised but a broken reed, "he is able to make her stand" not merely against the wind, but the very cyclones of temptation.

But we may well tremble to remember, that her sins were those of which only the smallest number repent. There is something exceedingly damning in violations of the seventh commandment. They are the flesh marks of everlasting perdition: and the slave of lust almost never escapes from the yoke of his bondage. "He that is abhorred of the Lord falls into this deep ditch." These form the last stage in the life of one whom God abandons. The most terrible display of hasty retribution which God has ever made on this earth, was in the lake of fire and brimstone, which once burned, where now rolls the sea of death. If there be no hell for other sinners, there is a lake of fire for those guilty of the sins of the flesh. Uncleaness was the sin of Sodom, reducing its inhabitants below the level of the brutes, destroying all spiritual aspirations, and leading to damnation begun below.

No sinner need be discouraged from applying to Jesus Christ, and this history is itself the greatest encouragement afforded by the Master himself. There are degrees of criminality and heinousness. Any step in the road that leads to the death of the soul is dangerous. If this woman went forward until the smell of the fire was on her garments: and thence retraced her steps to pardon and peace, her example stands as a beacon of warning, as well as a light of hope. Christ will welcome the returning prodigal, if he have spent all; he will blot out transgressions more in number than the sands of the sea; but it is presumption and madness to continue in evil, on the slender hope of a distant repentance, and salvation from the condemnation, and power of sins to which we are daily adding.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE SYROPHENICIAN WOMAN.

This account furnishes the only instance in which our Lord passed beyond the limits of Judea. From a combination of the gospel histories we learn that he went through the territory appertaining to Tyre and Sidon, and that he visited the latter city, passing through without remaining long. The hostility of his enemies forced him continually to change his location; and to remain, as it were, in concealment, covering up his course, and reappearing at unexpected points. His proceedings were marked by the most consummate prudence, fulfilling the ancient prophecy. "His object was not to organize a party; but to bring himself clearly before every one of the Jewish nation, not only in the towns, but also in the villages and the remote and secluded portions of the country; that every one might, in the enjoyment of the fullest light, decide the great question, on which the fate of the chosen nation depended.

One part of his errand at this time was to put himself within the reach of one of his sheep not of the Israelitish fold. While he was still in the suburbs of one of these cities, and before he had reached its crowded centre; he suddenly turned aside into a house, and "would have no man know it." Here it is necessary to remember the style of building then universally prevalent.

The house instead of occupying the front and centre of the lot as with us, was built around three sides of the lot, thus enclosing the yard, whose back portion was protected by a high fence, secluding it from observation from without entirely. Upon this central yard the windows and doors of the house opened. Upon the street was a blank wall without openings of any kind, except a door or gate entering an arched way through the house into the inner

yard or court, and closed with a solid shutter. The view of a house from the narrow and filthy street was desolate and uninviting to the last degree; while the court within might be ornamented with vines and flowers and perhaps a fountain, bright with colors and fragrant with perfumes, and cooled by continual evaporation. Porches ran around the three sides of the court, and not seldom awnings protecting them from the too direct rays of the summer sun. The houses were of a single story as at this day.

Our Lord having entered with his disciples and the few who had recognized him and followed, ordered the door into the street to be shut; and seemingly took all possible precautions to prevent publicity: "he would have no man know it." Sitting on one of the porches within, he was teaching the little company before him.

In these parts was a woman, a Syrophenician, debared from personal attendance upon Christ at a distance, by her lonely condition, and a living incumbrance consisting of a little daughter grievously vexed with a devil, that could not be entrusted to the care of another. She had heard with a real faith of his mighty works, and especially of his power over devils; and she believed him to be the seed of promise, the conqueror of Satan, and the Savior of the world. She probably had clearer and more scriptural views of him than his chosen apostles, and possessed a faith, which once fixed never wavered. It was submitted to the harshest tests, being tried as by fire; but it came out of the ordeal bright and pure.

She had been learning by daily report of his approach, as he drew nigher day by day; until at last he was in the city, and not far from her dwelling. A mighty gratitude swelled her heart as she learned the fact. Aware of his presence, she was determined to find him: and it was from her that he was hiding. Peter, the real author of Mark's gospel, an eye witness of all, in the case of several separate histories, conveys to us the climax of the whole account by a most felicitous touch of narration in perhaps very few words, casting the strongest light of all the evangelists upon the passing scene. This case affords an instance. After he has told us that the master "would have no man know" his where-

abouts, he adds: "but he could not be hid; for a certain woman, whose daughter was grievously vexed with a devil, having heard of him, came."

We here get a glimpse of industrious persistency. Like the spouse in Solomon's song, she went about the city in the streets and broadways thereof, seeking him whom her soul loved. She inquired of every passer, she followed up every trace, she explored every avenue; so that it was impossible for him to be hidden. Our Lord concealed himself so closely, that had it been possible to discourage and divert her, it would have been accomplished. As soon as it became evident that her determination would never yield, that her search would never be relinquished until it was successful, that closed doors could not defeat her, her assiduity was rewarded. Some one whom she addressed had seen him, and at last she found herself before him.

The first sight was enough: it needed not to point him out. Royalty never had such a presence; his personality made its impression on all beholders. The illustrious seed of the woman, the vanquisher of Satan was indeed before her. Matthew teaches us, that without the ornaments and adjuncts of office, his appearance betokened an individuality endowed with a superhuman force, a weight of character, and accompanying atmosphere of influence, which his poor surroundings could never hide. Poor and contemptible in comparison was the pomp of kings, mere gilded puppets. Here was the King of Glory, recognizable through the disguise of poverty.

We gather from the history, that without listening to his discourse, she began at once to make known her need and to supplicate his aid. Standing on the outside of the little throng, she cried: "O Lord, thou son of David, have mercy on me; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." By this address, she proclaimed what in her inmost heart she believed; that he was the expected Messiah, and that he had the rule over the powers of evil. In this faith the event proved her steadfast and immovable.

As he seemed not to heed nor even to hear; she repeated again and again and again her request; but had she appealed to a god of wood or stone she would have been as

successful. "He answered her not a word." Again and again she called; but we judge from the history, that it is doubtful if she attracted even a look. He sat like a man of stone indifferent to her earnest call. With her views of Jesus, this must have been very unexpected and very disappointing. To her he was the very embodiment of the love of God, and as tender in dealing with human infirmity as the supreme father; not breaking the bruised reed, nor quenching the smoking flax.

Did she muse in her mind, can this be the great helper promised, whose mercy is higher than the heaven, and broader than the earth, and deeper than the sea? Can he be the Messiah, and be so insensible to the crushing, killing needs of suffering humanity? If such thoughts passed, as they undoubtedly did, they were not allowed a lodgement in her soul. Evil is ever present with us; but it takes no more control than we give it. She had convictions respecting him that could not be shaken.

Again and again she repeated her application, until it became impossible to listen to the teachings even of Jesus; and then the attention of the assembly was engrossed by her to their vast annoyance and discomfort; and all but he were discomposed; yet he answered her not a word.

At this stage the disciples seem to have taken up her cause, and to have represented to the master that the attention of the people was entirely distracted by the interruption; and that it was useless to attempt to teach, while every minute brought a new outburst from this stricken and agonized mother; and they therefore advised that he either grant her request, or give her so pointed a refusal as to silence her entirely. Indeed from the brief narrative it seems possible that he may have turned his back upon her, and left the place; as the disciples state, that "She crieth after us," possibly in the street. However this may be, his attention is now called to her in such a manner, that he cannot avoid taking some notice of her. The whole crowd of disciples and hearers are now fixing their attention upon her; and it becomes incumbent on the master to speak respecting her, or to her personally. He can no longer be silent.

He at length speaks, but vouchsafes her not a word: if he looks, it is with stony indifference; but he directs his answer to the disciples: and his words are pointed enough: "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Here was a direct answer delivered with a truly Jewish positiveness. It savored of the bigotry and narrowness of the Jew, and seemed to meet the convictions of the disciples themselves. The Canaanite had ever been an abhorrence to their fathers. These words must have had a crushing effect upon the woman: indeed we perceive it in her tone.

It was natural that she should think: Why? is it possible, that he is full of the bigotry and self-conceit so hateful in the whole Israelitish people? He appears as narrow in his views, and as contracted in his sympathies as the smallest of his race. While such thoughts arose, they were not suffered to take possession of her. Gathering strength from the promises of the Jewish scriptures, that "all nations shall be blessed in the seed of Abraham:" that "the glory of God shall be revealed" in Messiah "and all flesh shall behold it together:" that his salvation is to be for the ends of the earth and not for Jews only; though crushed to earth, she rises with invigorated faith, asking herself, why does he come here then among Gentiles, if he have nothing for us. She certainly had a stronger faith than the disciples, who seem to have acquiesced in the decision of the master already delivered, that his help was not for such as her.

The Jewish scriptures a Gentile could better understand than a Jew. The eyes of the chosen people were blinded by such a national pride, and egregious self-estimation; that they could not understand that the Messiah was ever represented as the helper and savior of the race; that the promise was not so much to the seed of Abraham, as the seed of Adam. If any one thing was inculcated in the Old Testament by every variety of statement; it is that the Messiah should come for the world of mankind, and not, as the Jew in his blindness fancied, for the deliverance of Israel merely. The minds of the apostles were not so clear upon this point, as was the mind of this Gentile woman.

Though broken in pieces by his manner as well as by his words, her faith in him as the son of God and savior of the

world is not destroyed nor even shaken. We can imagine her quivering with anguish, choking with great sobs of agony, yet clinging more firmly to the promises of God, and placing her feet more solidly upon the foundation of his word. She was staying herself upon some of the exceeding great and precious declarations, which had long been as reviving cordials to her fainting spirit; and having taken hold of the girdle of the divine faithfulness, she was tightening her grasp, resolved, that nothing short of an unequivocal refusal of help should drive her away. There are trials from which God wisely refuses deliverance: but in these his grace is sufficient for us to sustain us, so as that they become aids, even if they are crosses. Her feeling was, he shall at least say, go, and my grace shall be sufficient for thee.

Determined and animated by new hope, she presses forward to his very presence. We think that the sympathies of the beholders were with her, and that they opened a way, that she might approach to his very seat; and we read that she came and cast herself down at his feet. Her prayer was very short: she could say no more than, "Lord help me." It was what has been well called the prayer of silence, when the soul is too full for utterance, and in place of words groans go up, unutterable in the language of earth. He can no longer avoid looking at her and speaking to her; the interest of the whole company is concentrated upon her, and the issue of her case.

Before him is a heart broken and contrite, reduced to powder as it were; but he gives it another blow still. Preserving his appearance of indifference and coldness he says: "it is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to dogs." Why does she not rise up and say I thought that the Messiah of God had indeed come for the race of man, and not for the Jew only; but this cannot be he, he does not fill the description. He does not agree with what the scriptures plainly say.

No, her convictions respecting him and his mission can suffer no change. Nothing could be more harsh or severe than his response, but it does not repel her. She is ready with a reply that takes his own words of refusal, and turns them into an argument in her favor. "Truth Lord," she

says, dog I am, and am asking not for a child's but a dog's portion; "the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their master's table." I am asking for only a crumb of mercy.

Immediately the whole manner and speech of the master changed from frigid and repellent, to the most benignant and approving softness. He broke into unusual commendation and said: "O woman great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt." He had been the while concealing his mercy; now he threw aside all reserve, and revealed the secret purpose, which had brought him out of the holy land into the neighborhood of Gentiles and idolaters.

He had come for this express object to find and to bless one of his suffering people. The good shepherd goes into the wilderness to seek "his own" sheep, "to bind up that which was broken, and strengthen that which was sick." His mission is to heal the broken-hearted and set at liberty them that are bruised. His conduct is explained. He knows when the hour, the moment has come, when relief can be administered, and the cordials of grace can be wisely vouchsafed.

Jacob's prayer at Peniel was recorded by inspiration, because it was the most fervent that man ever uttered; it overcame the angel, and wrested a blessing from a seemingly reluctant donor. Here stands a history, a fitting match for it. That angel with the secret name at Peniel and Jesus of Nazareth are one and the same. What a school the apostles were learning in! what a teacher they had! No wonder they said: "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." This whole occurrence doubtless illustrated the sermon which he was preaching, and stamped what he taught upon the memories of the listeners. His exhortations to the exercise of faith were enforced with incredible power, as only he could enforce.

We know not what communications passed between the Lord and this disciple. He, who had come to Sidon for her sake, led her into "the green pastures and beside the still waters." Where he had torn, he healed; where he had smitten, he poured in the oil of consolation. In all this there had been a new revelation of God; a window had been opened in heaven; and she had been called to look in

upon the things that are unseen. Her joy was full, not only from the relief of her little daughter, but much more from the new views which she had gained of God and his only son. Christ revealed himself more fully, rending the veil from before the Holy of Holies, showing the eternal realities hidden beneath the types, and feeding her with the heavenly manna of divine knowledge. A great light shone into her soul and a new life infused its secret power in connection with it. This history shows:

1. That Jesus is always nigh unto them who call upon him in spirit and in truth. This mother was so detained at home with the care and nursing of this helpless child, that she could not go to Jesus; and therefore the Savior came to her. We may never know precisely what demoniac possession was. It does not seem to have been identical with insanity, which seldom occurs in the young, and is not a children's disease at all. That spirits good and malignant frequented this earth more than in any previous or subsequent age, seems clear from the word of God.

It was the age of the supernatural, introduced by the miraculous star and the healing power in the waters of Bethesda. It seems easiest to accept the statements of the evangelists in their plainest sense, that the demons were spirits from the abyss, or "deep" as the A. V. has it, to which the command of Christ could have consigned them, had he seen it best to drive them from the world. Their presence was perhaps permitted in order that his victorious power might be more fully displayed in their subjection. The great contest in progress was not so much between men and the Redeemer, as between Satan and the seed that came to bruise his head. It was a great and grievous affliction. Jesus sought the opportunity of helping her. Wherever a broken heart is found, there the great physician is near, waiting for our call. Afflictions which drive us to him are our greatest mercies; therefore human life is filled with sorrows, and hearts are overwhelmed with trials greater than can be borne.

2. Deep humiliation always precedes the divine blessing. He smote this loving mother, whom he came to help with the "sharp two-edged sword, that proceedeth out of his mouth"

again and again. He refused her application again and again. He left no room for a repetition of her request; but cast her off from all standing ground of hope. His answer seemed to be final, not leaving a loop hole through which to secure a second hearing. This harsh treatment was absolutely needed, or it would not have been employed; and its effect was salutary. "He does not willingly afflict nor grieve the children of men." The rod in its heaviest blows is wielded by the hand of infinite love.

He threw all her unworthiness in her face, until she acknowledged that she had no child's claim whatever upon him; but like the dog (not a petted animal with the Jews as with us, but unclean and outcast) was to be left to take her chance for the crumbs and crusts under the table. When we thus appear before him renouncing every claim, appealing to his sovereign mercy alone, we are then in our proper place. "Thus saith the high and lofty one, though heaven is my throne, and the earth is my foot-stool; to this man will I look, even to him that is of an humble and contrite heart." No sight in heaven or on earth of angel or saint so rivets the gaze of the all-seeing one, as the sight of a sinner truly humble and contrite. Ranks of burning seraphs and shining angels do not so move and enlist the heart of him who suffered for our redemption.

It is matter of astonishment, what severity of dealing is required to produce in us this genuine humility. Our life is reduced to a span or hand-breadth: and it is filled with sorrow: waters of a full cup are wrung out to us, and tears are our meat day and night. "I am astonished how much it took to make me a christian" said one, after friends had died, property had been lost, and distresses had been multiplied: until nothing seemed left to live for. The treatment of the great physician, and the medicine he administers nearly kill the patient; but they are no more than the case demands. He does not die under the operation: and that is the most that can be said. Like a skilful surgeon, the savior has his finger on the pulse, and at the moment of need, he bestows the comforting cordials of the covenant: and the patient revives, and enters upon the new life of hope and joy.

3. When God bestows his blessing, it is full and overflowing. His measure is always a heaping measure, pressed down and running over: "be it unto thee even as thou wilt." At the last, there was no drawback to her joy; her cup was full. The dear child, whose welfare was precious to her as her own, is to be a life-long comfort and help; the clog which anchored her to a perpetual prison was not only removed; but she received an angel child to be the stay and joy of her life. And this was not all; she had been admitted to a face view of the angel of the covenant, who wrestled with Jacob; of him who spoke with Moses from the burning bush; and had seen the glory of God as it shines from the face of Jesus Christ.

Heaven has no higher quality of joy but a far higher degree of the same. There is "the fulness of joy." These are the things "which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man to conceive." To perceive more than this would rend the tie that binds us to flesh and blood, and dissolve the earthly house of this tabernacle. Probably no one was admitted to a closer communion with the master on earth; though the meagre history gives us no particulars of what would gratify our curiosity, rather than edify our souls.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE MAN BORN BLIND. JOHN IX.

That the events related in this chapter followed immediately upon the would-be murderous assault, narrated in the previous chapter, seems probable from the fourth verse: "The night cometh, when no man can work." The malice of the enemies just now exhibited, will finally prevail to cut off my life; but little time remains to me; and it must be spent in words of mercy upon all within my reach. A deep pathos sounds in the words. As he was leaving the temple grounds, he came upon a man born blind, who well illustrated the spiritual condition of hopeless darkness, in which the leaders of Israel were; and whom he made an example of his ability and desire to deliver them.

It was evident to every beholder, that the man had been born blind; his quivering lids covered sockets, in which were only the rudiments of eye-balls. The Savior's pity moved over the poor man imprisoned in unbroken night; but yearned more tenderly for those, who would have just then stoned him. He longed to teach them, that one was present who had the power and the desire to open their prison to the light of spiritual joy and salvation. His pity assumed a deeper fervor ever, as the deadly hatred of his enemies showed itself more clearly. As he halted before the man, his disciples asked: "Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" giving utterance to the Jewish notion, that such cases were punishments for some one's sins. The answer given to their inquiry was such as this beggar had never listened to before in his whole life: "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God might be manifested in him." Such sympathy and wisdom took his soul captive at once. He knew nothing of the speaker, except there were those who called him

“Master.” His very soul must have thrilled at the words: “As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”

Our Lord’s masterly prudence forbade the restoration of the blind man’s sight on the spot, in the close vicinity of the raging opposers: so he sent him away a little distance. His principal sense being the touch, he addressed him through it, by making an ointment of clay from his own spittle, and anointing the blind eyes with it; saying to him: “Go, wash in the pool of the Sent One:” for God has sent me to open the eyes of the blind. The gentle touch of the Master’s hand, as well as the soft sympathy of his voice, aided the poor man to a faith, that filled him with inward strength and expectation. Nor was he disappointed: he went and washed, and came seeing. “The works of God were” indeed “manifested in him,” as the Pharisees themselves afterwards confessed: Vs. 24. All took place for the glory of God, more than for the special relief of the sufferer, and this was imprinted on his memory.

Here is a picture: the background is made up of angry opposers. The darkness not only does not comprehend the light; but resists it, and would murder the messenger of light. In the foreground the central figure is the deliverer, whose love is as ready, as his power is absolute; a witness for him stands at his side, bearing a testimony in his own person.

The reception of sight by one born blind well represents the conversion of the blind soul; inasmuch as it is the greatest physical change conceivable. The poor creature born blind knows not that he is blind, having no conception of the lacking sense. Such an one can form no correct idea of light from all the information possible to him, any more than a Christian on earth can form a correct idea of the heavenly life. It is impossible for those blest with sight to realize the abject condition of one who has never beheld the day. He is imprisoned within the narrow circuit of his daily rounds; and no effort of his mind can reveal to him the sense, by which his fellowmen become cognizant of things far away to a measureless distance. The acquisition of sight transferred the favored individual from his little circle to the boundless universe. It was the gaining of an en-

tirely new sense, the farthest reaching, and the most valuable of all, one that multiplies life a thousand fold, and enlarging its sphere beyond calculation. No greater earthly boon can be mentioned; and it is the greatest of which man can be the subject. It was a change affecting the whole man; it was visible in the poise of the head, the carriage of the body, the freer use of the limbs, the illumination of the countenance, and the ever moving windows of observation, from which the soul is scrutinizing its surroundings.

While such a change thus affects the whole person, it is the smallest possible change in perhaps the smallest member of the human body. No part was adjusted except the eye, a little orb about one inch in diameter. If any matter was added to its mass, it was only a very few grains; and it was done by a creative act. The ball was rounded out into its normal fulness; the lenses were readjusted; the internal machinery was put into working order: for it is a machine equally with the telescope. The delicate arrangements within the tiny globe assumed their functions without disturbance of any other part or portion of the frame. There could not have been a slighter modification; but it transformed the whole person. The neighbors, familiar with him from childhood, were divided in opinion as to his identity: until he assured them: so vast was the difference in his general appearance, while evidently the same individual known to them familiarly all his life.

It was instantaneous in its occurrence. In some cases, the blind received their sight under the very hands of the Master; in others at a distance from him on compliance with the stipulated conditions; but in every case, the recovery took place in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. In no case was there any process. The inquisitors appear to have been astounded on learning, that the recipient of sight was not in the company of his benefactor; and that the miracle had been effected without the presence of the healer himself at all. When the waters of Siloam loosened the scales of clay on the man's eyelids; instantly he was in the light of a new world. Old things had passed away; and all things had become new. This is a characteristic of the acts of Almighty God; "he speaks, and it is done;

he commands, and it stands fast." There is no succession of steps: his will is effective by a single volition. All the needed changes in the organ of vision occurred simultaneously; and were perfected at once.

The *modus operandi* of second causes can be definitely traced and described; and the result reached is the effect of their intelligible operation: when God acts immediately, there is no understanding of any of his matters. Cavilers often wish to have enjoyed the privilege of beholding a miracle. Had they been present on any such an occasion, they would have found that there was nothing to see. The spectacle of a miracle would have nothing in it more convincing, than the record of it, which we possess.

It was inexplicable by the subject himself. He knew no more about the manner of its accomplishment, than we do at the distance of two thousand years. One moment he was blind, he washed, and in that moment he saw. These were his only sensations. He was conscious of nothing beside. When required to tell how the miracle was effected, he knew nothing more. Neither the clay nor the water, nor the mud resulting from their mixture, had any efficacy in producing the recovery; their action was antagonistic totally. The efficacy was not in them; but in the power of Christ. When men can understand how light shone at his bidding; how matter started into being at his word; they can then understand how the man born blind saw. The power of God operates in our own frame incessantly; it wakens the heart to action every second of time; it rouses the lungs to inflate themselves at every breath; it stimulates every vessel to its normal action; and yet we are not sensible of his presence nor of his agency; his hand is hidden behind what we call natural law. No more did the blind man feel the power that restored him. There was no preparation; the spectators saw nothing; there was no process; the subject himself felt nothing. Divine power acts silently, and beyond the domain of human observation. How does the grass grow? How are the mighty operations of nature carried on?

How exactly are all these enumerated particulars verified in the regeneration of a human soul? may be asked.

Regeneration is the greatest change of which human nature is susceptible. Civilization, education, refinement are capable of great effects; but they can only modify. The change spoken of is radical: it takes place at the very fountain of our life: it is an engrafting into the very root of our being; it is the introduction of an infinitesimal germ of a new life into our very blood. Yet there is no change of individuality: Peter is Peter still, and Paul is Paul. It is a change of receptivity. The eye, once impervious to the light of truth, now opens to receive it with gladness. The heart that once rejected Jesus Christ now warms with emotion at the simple mention of his name. This renewal of man's inmost nature is the mighty power of God, and inexplicable by any human philosophy; neither can it be explained by its subjects to the comprehension of others. It can be known only by experience. The act of faith cannot be described so as to be understood by an inquiring investigator. There is but one teacher who can make it plain to human understanding; and he can help the humble soul to exercise it. It is his office to do this: it is he whom Jesus calls the comforter. The only true comfort to erring man is the exercise of this faith. The soul is not conscious of his agency until his work is completed, and the blind sees.

It is the wish of many a skeptical reader of the New Testament, under the impression that the world has been too ready to receive as miracles of supernatural power occurrences which, if tested by the improved methods of the present age, would not have passed examination, that some of the works of Christ could have been subjected to close and searching investigation of a hostile kind. Here we have a miracle investigated by the most bitter and determined hostility; all the possible witnesses in the case called: their testimony received with the most exacting caution: the inquiry pushed to the limits of patience: and the conclusion to which the whole city came is expressed in John 11: 37. "Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that this man (Lazarus) should not have died?" It was universally conceded that this was a miracle of the highest order, and the mind of

the people settled to that conviction. Indeed, the man himself was as well known as Caiaphas or Pilate, and was in the streets every day: and had become a bold confessor. Who can be better known than a blind beggar, or a life-long cripple who had hung around the temple gates from childhood up, though poor?

The most interesting feature of the whole affair is now reached: this restoration took place on the Sabbath day. A keen controversy had been long waging against Jesus about this very point, attended with a murderous bitterness on their part. They were maintaining restrictions confessedly not ordained of God: and Jesus was contending for the liberation of the Sabbath from their burdensome traditions. It was impossible to make him desist from healing on the holy day. There are seven or eight instances recorded of such miracles, besides others unrecorded: and in this case, he comes up to Jerusalem crowded with the whole assembled nation, and performs an astounding miracle within sight and hearing of the temple itself on the Sabbath day. He does not even wait to be implored; but volunteers his succor.

The healing of the impotent man at Bethesda related in John v, had roused terrible resentment. What but a tenfold greater antagonism could be expected from this fresh provocation of the rulers? On this occasion there had been no breach of their traditions by bearing a burden or any other injunction violating their rules: their rage was against the miracle itself; as though the most suitable day for the release of one from the prison of a life-long night, were not God's holy day: to be a red letter day forever in the man's memory.

Not only had this most notable miracle been wrought under the eyes of the rulers, and in defiance of their injunctions; but what made it intolerably odious to them was, that it was a reassertion with most tremendous emphasis of all the claims, which he had advanced, when called to account for the healing of the impotent man, for which they had determined to put him to death. The words rang in their ears yet: "my Father worketh hitherto, and I work." He claimed full equality and even one-

ness with God. The father and son according to his statement were inseparable in all their acts. He claimed all the rights of the Father, all the honor due unto the Father, and to be the object of faith equally with the Father.

Could a frowning Sanhedrin or a raging people move him from his position? The rulers saw what they had discovered long before; that he could never abate one jot or tittle of his prerogatives; that their own demurrer was only like the angry waves dashing themselves to pieces against the eternal rock: that his principles would destroy their rule and traditions together. How his words were remembered! Never were the sayings of a man clothed with such self-perpetuating power. In their thoughts they still saw him, as though it were but yesterday, standing before the senate of Israel with the utmost intrepidity asserting of himself what no other being could have uttered without blasphemy.

The only concession made by him was, that as mediator he was subordinate; that he was sent by the Father; that the miracles were given him to do; that the message which he brought was committed to him; but that all this was consistent with his full equality with the Almighty Father. The only testimony, which he would admit in the case, was the testimony of the Father himself expressed by the works given him to do. All was distinct in their memory; such things can never be forgotten, nor ever lose their astounding significance. The ineffable grandeur that uttered them was more offensive still. The whole scene remained in their memory, and glowed before them with a fresh light now; and aggravated their dislike to an intensity.

The blind man, confessedly innocent of all crime, except the acknowledgement that Jesus was a prophet, they resolved to be avenged upon; as they afterwards sought to put Lazarus to death, for the crime of aiding and abetting, while he was dead and lying unconscious in his grave. "Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? Behold, the world is [gone after him,]" was the taunt, by which they instigated one another.

The inflexibility of the Nazarene left his enemies no alternative but to receive him as the Messiah, or to destroy him. It were easier to bend the axis of the earth, than to deflect him from his path.

This blind man knew two things: that whereas he was blind, now he saw; he also knew that Jesus was a prophet and a righteous man, whom God heard. One position could as well be disputed as the other. His convictions were too deep to be overcome by the dictation of the sanhedrin. He not only acknowledged Jesus before the council as approved of God; but he became his advocate to their faces; and the common sense of the illiterate man led him to contradict the united wisdom of the senate, though but a youth just of age: and brave their vindictive displeasure, not following the example of his parents in equivocating. He felt that the honor of God was entrusted to him by his benefactor, when he had compassion upon him.

Christ has always had advocates in the darkest and most distressing times; and no one ever lost by him. Though he lose life even, yet shall he be the gainer still. Jesus had watched the proceedings; and soon rewarded the man, who suffered in his cause. We are told that soon he found him and said to him: "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" His usual denomination of himself was the Son of Man. The question meant, Dost thou believe that the power that healed thee resides in me? and that the mercy, which unsought blessed thee, is in me as a fountain? in a word, that I am not merely a prophet, but the Christ? The confessor was willing to accept the testimony of Jesus respecting himself; and when informed that he claimed to be the Son of God, he immediately assented with all his heart to the news communicated. Faith receives Christ just for what he professes to be; and this faith in the heart of this man was an eye opened in his soul, by which he recognized Jesus as the Son of God on the spot and on the instant. He believed that the Savior would deliver him from the power of sin, as readily as he had delivered him from the night in which he had hitherto lived.

They were not alone: a company of Pharisees and supporters of the council were around them. Indeed the world

gazes on Christians, when they exhibit the spirit of the Master; they are "men wondered at." Jesus was the centre of the gaze of all eyes wherever he might be. Before them all, the new convert fell down, and worshipped the Son of God. He was by no means ashamed to own his Lord. Men had cast him out; but Christ had received him. Christ was not ashamed of him, though "altogether born in sins." From this time forth, he wore the name of the Nazarene as a diadem around his brow. Jesus had gained a disciple; and a sinner had gained a Savior.

The occurrence terminated by the solemn announcement from the lips of Christ to the crowd around them: "For judgment am I come into this world; that they who see not may see; and that they who see might be made blind."

The auditors understood that he was speaking of spiritual and judicial blindness, and they asked: "Are we blind, also?" Our Lord's answer was most impressive: "If ye were blind," and destitute of the faculty of discernment, "ye should have no sin;" "but now ye say we see;" you acknowledge the possession of all the faculties necessary to an impartial investigation, and an honest reception of the truth: "therefore your sin remaineth." Your blindness is a guilty and wilful rejection of the light, and the sin of such a course rests upon you. This opened the whole subject of their guilt to their comprehension, and left the doom of their condemnation upon their own heads.

No reply could be more solemn, isolating as it were every hearer, and leaving to him the decision of his own everlasting destiny, according as he received or rejected the testimony of God respecting his son. The miracle was left to declare by its silent witness how ready Jesus was to afford his help to all who desired deliverance from the blinding influence of a sinful nature and sinful world; and that he was full of longing desire to save even those who were following him with stones, and fighting against God's truth.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE RICH YOUNG RULER.

The conversation, which our Lord held with this young man, is to us the most intensely interesting on some accounts of all his interviews. The disciples were evidently more surprised, more enlightened, and more influenced subsequently by what they heard at this time, than by any other of their Master's talks. When we read that after the Pentecost many sold all their possessions, and laid the money at the apostles' feet, we are hearing the echo of the words of Christ spoken at this time. Though parting with their worldly estate was not made obligatory, yet many adopted our Lord's estimate of earthly possessions, and saw in them an obstacle to the salvation of the soul.

The obstacle is rather in the sordid mind, than in the possessions themselves, which are talents committed for use in the service of God, and aid of humanity. The present is emphatically the age when riches are worshipped and trusted in; when money makes the man, and is the object that absorbs the thoughts, and animates the efforts of the world; and no portion of holy writ more deserves the consideration of the men of this day, than this account. If Zaccheus felt the necessity of the sacrifice which he made, and numberless others have followed in the same path, the sincerity of their devotion is undoubted; and their confidence in the hundred-fold more promised in this life. There is no better debtor than Jehovah, and the man who has given to him, has his note for repayment on call.

This young man was evidently well-informed respecting the Nazarene. With unusual candor he had listened to all that could be learned respecting him. He may have seen and heard him at some of the great feasts at Jerusalem, and kept himself well posted about his mighty works; and

become in a degree satisfied of his superhuman standing. These works bore continual witness of his divinity. No honest observer could fail of being impressed with his infinite superiority, and of being led to question whether he were not their expected Messiah; and also whether he were not of a nature superior and divine. This young man may have long desired the opportunity of consulting him, but in the absence of the multitude. Whoever addressed him, when surrounded by a press of observers, became at once the focus of the gaze of perhaps thousands, and subjected himself to a moral dissection for the benefit of the hearers, being sure to be shown up without disguise. All men have a natural modesty and reticence about their religious feelings; a sincere inquirer has downright shame.

When this ruler saw the teacher come out of some house into the public road unattended by a crowd, he felt that his opportunity had arrived. By falling on his knees before him, he expressed his more than half formed conviction; that he was the Christ of God, and a being whom it were not idolatry to worship. Still, while he felt the force of the testimony to his divinity, his assent thereto was not complete: and he was in that state of uncertainty about Jesus Christ, in which so many live and die. Yet he addressed him merely as "good teacher" for whom he felt the greatest veneration; and in expressing which he was very sincere and candid. Candor belonged to his character.

1. He had ever been scrupulously moral. From a child he had known the scriptures, in which the law of God is the principal thing, and had conformed his life to its rigid requirements. As our Lord named the stern commands of the decalogue, he could say without falsehood: "all these have I kept from my youth up." Doubtless he would not have affirmed, that he had never been guilty of a violation of one of these precepts; but that he had never allowed himself in any infraction of them; but had made conscience of conformity of them from his earliest recollection: for the man never lived, who could pretend to more. In all the relations of life as son, as neighbor, as citizen, as ruler, and he may have been a Sanhedrist, for such is the meaning of the word: the same which defines

the position of Nicodemus; he had made it his ruling purpose to square his conduct by the law of God; and "to keep a conscience void of offence toward God and man."

This was no vain boast; for we are told that on his saying this, the Savior fixed his gaze upon him with such an expression in his speaking eyes, as showed the deepest tenderness and pity: "Jesus looking upon him loved him." His emotion was not concealed: his disciples observed it, and it was to him more than meat and drink to instruct the inquirer. He, who pitied his murderers in the midst of their cruelty, was moved with an intense yearning towards a sincere seeker. In this young man, the harshness of human nature had been repressed; and its amiable traits had been fostered. The sect of moralists could not have had a more unexceptionable representative. Bred in the strictest rules of rigid Judaism, he stood a living example of honesty, honor, purity and family affection.

The religion of the day brought forward its most worthy votary; and he is such as all ever admire: and we stand with bated breath to hear the verdict of him who is the truth in the case. The feelings of the judge are favorable to the applicant, forbidding any undue severity of decision. He is to be weighed in the balances of the sanctuary, by him to whom God has committed all judgment. If he does not pass the scrutiny, no member of the human family will ever be able to stand on his own merits. This then is a judgment of the race, rather than of a single individual; and one, in which every man should have a lively interest.

2. He was yet unhappy, most unhappy, though blessed with abundance, and able to gratify every reasonable want. The most miserable character on earth is the one which we designate as the almost Christian; possessing too much light and knowledge to find joy in unholy indulgences; not daring any defiance of right and truth; and still having no joy in God. Morality the most rigid can never make a man happy: indeed it makes us most unhappy. When alarmed by fears of the future, we hold ourselves most sternly to the demands of the law of God, our misery only grows: our life is a continual repression. An intolerable

constraint is upon us, exerting its malign force without intermission. The soul of such a one is like an arid desert, in which no fountain of living water springs up from its own depths.

Often in thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, fear comes upon him, and trembling which makes all his bones to shake. An image is before his eyes, and he hears a voice saying: "Shall mortal man be more just than God?" At such times "God openeth the ears of men and sealeth their instruction." In the privacy of his soul this man knew that all was not right with him; he was not satisfied with himself; and his spirit often sank with fear. A soul unreconciled to God can know no peace; but is like a living organism out of its proper element. Man has innate longings for God and immortality, which no worldliness can stifle, nor even vice eradicate.

Possessing an insatiable desire for knowledge, he most of all desires to know God. He has a capacity of affection greater than he feels for earthly friends; the throne of his heart is vacant, and waiting for a sovereign to occupy it. His spiritual necessities demand something more than this world can furnish. These ungratified aspirations embitter life. Such was this young ruler, who was moved to seek from the Nazarene a knowledge of what would meet and satisfy the demands of his immortal being. Respectability, honor, religiousness recommended him: let us hear the testing.

He ran with eagerness and upon his knees he asked: "Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" Our Savior's reply was directly to the point. "Why callest thou me good?" It was equivalent to saying, the main thing is to recognize my real personality. You address me as a prophet; yet you kneel to me in the semblance of a worshipper. You acknowledge me as a good man: and yet if I am a good man, if I am true, I am more than man. Do you mean that you worship me as God? My claims are real: my works are true witnesses, that the Father hath sent me. Am I also divine? None is good but God only.

This is the one fundamental point of Christianity, the *sine qua non* of true religion. Yet it did not seem to impress the mind of the inquirer with the weight which its importance merited. As he made no avowal of conviction of the high character of his "teacher," we are forced to believe that he did not apprehend, that he was above prophets. The divinity of Jesus Christ is the hardest doctrine of the word of God for a moralist to receive. In the face of testimony, he will deny or ignore it; and wrest the scriptures to rid himself of it, though the attempt is like blotting the sun out of the sky. In his creed there is no room for a divine Savior, because he feels no need for such a helper. If man needs only to be enlightened, stimulated, and encouraged, he looks for an accredited teacher. This was the ruler's position. If he needs to be redeemed from an endless suffering, and from sin, which is the procuring cause of it, he must look for a divine redeemer.

This inquirer expected to be saved by some "good thing" that himself should do or suffer, not knowing that a man cannot be his own savior. His eyes were not opened to see the utterness of his need. A sense of guilt is the "eye salve" that enables a sinner to see. It opens the fountains of tears that wash out the beams that prevent sight. The entrance of light gives excruciating pain; but salutary is the pain which truth produces. It pierces like a sharp, two-edged sword with a death-thrust; but healing and resurrection follow. The gospel becomes "tidings" never heard before; man needs a Savior; a truth never apprehended before; the whole scheme of gospel doctrine presents itself in a new significance. The one truth that sheds this new light over all is the supreme deity of Jesus Christ.

Our Lord's further direction was well calculated to make known to him his deficiencies: "but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." And when the young man asked: "which," as though in doubt whether the precepts of the moral, or the ordinances of the ceremonial law were intended, our Lord in reply enumerated the commands of the second table, omitting entirely the duty which we owe to God.

The garbled epitome of the law, which our Savior recited, could hardly fail of sounding ridiculous in the ears of a devout and instructed Jew, who carried the *SHEMA* upon his forehead, and it must have been full of suggestion to the hearers. The sum of the first table, "thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength," which is the first and the great command of the law, was utterly ignored. Compliance with this, the first, secures obedience to the second.

This enumeration of our Lord was designed to teach the hearer that in his obedience, he confined himself wholly to the discharge of his duties to men, unmindful entirely of that supreme duty which he owed to God, and came short in the essential and fundamental basis of all religion. The disinclination of men to believe in God, or to yield obedience or affection if they do believe, is perhaps the strangest phenomenon of human experience. If pretended science can form a plausible theory of existence without the necessity of a creator, by which the present condition of things could exist, as the result of forces other than the agency of a self-existing God, how open to conviction is the human mind! "The fool," i. e., every unconverted man "hath said in his heart, no God." Atheism is the universal sin: and it is nothing less than moral insanity. If men are forced by incontrovertible evidence to admit the personality of the infinite, and to acknowledge a God; the belief has little influence on the feelings or conduct.

There is a strange insensibility to argument and to a sense of obligation as well. God is excluded from the creed if possible, and from the affections universally. Man was created to glorify God and enjoy him here: but from his heart God is excluded altogether. This young ruler was like all others, "without God in the world:" and our Lord's method of discovering this to him was one that would tell upon a Jew.

God is not only to be believed in; but to have our heart and soul and mind and strength. The love which he requires is to be based on a correct understanding of his character. If the views entertained of him do not corres-

pond with the scripture representations, any emotion which we may feel towards the unreal being of our own fancy, is an offering to a false God. Love to him is not an admiration for the great author of nature; it is not a sentimentalism toward the parent of our being; it is a real and warm affection towards a holy, sin-hating God, connected with a true repentance for our own sins. How careful Joshua was to enforce upon the Israelites, when they insisted that they would serve the Lord, the necessity of a correct knowledge of him. He said: "Ye cannot serve the Lord, for he is a holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. If you forsake him he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you after that he hath done you good."

If any one of the doctrines of the Bible is denied, the object of worship is changed, and a new and false god receives our allegiance. Love of him is to be sincere; love to our dearest friends is a conscious emotion; he demands a love stronger than we feel for them, or for our own life. Real affection is unmistakable; being a conscious delight in the object of our attachment, binding us by the most tender bonds, and rendering separation worse than death; as it entails while continued the loss of all happiness and joy. Will *he* accept any less? He is to be "our exceeding joy," "we are to delight ourselves in him," and make him "our exceeding great reward."

What less does he demand when he requires to be loved with all the heart *i. e.* the hidden spring of our being and with all the soul *i. e.* all our sensitive emotions; with all the mind *i. e.* our power of thought, and with all the strength *i. e.* with all the resources of our service. He is the God of love; his throne is the government of love; his law, the law of love; the force by which he conquers is the irresistible power of love; his happiness, the happiness of love gratified in blessing. He calls himself "a jealous God:" and what is jealousy but the excess of love, the insanity of love? He loves the race of man and has done so much for them, that he looks with jealousy upon any rival to himself in our affections.

Without this love to him men can render no acceptable obedience. Did "I give all my goods to feed the poor or my body to be burned; without love it profiteth me nothing." God asks not gifts and sacrifices; but real, genuine and ardent love. In this our great duty to God, the young ruler was wholly deficient; while our Savior took the most direct way of setting before him his shortcoming, it seems that he did not apprehend the application, and asked: "What lack I yet?" It became necessary to designate the idol that robbed God of his affection; and this the Lord hastened to do. His answer was: "Sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and come, take up the cross and follow me." This is the idol; and Dagon must fall before the ark of God. The young inquirer was thoroughly stunned by this announcement; for he had great possessions, and trusted in his riches, with the confidence due to God only.

The twelve gathered more closely around, and held their breath with measureless astonishment to hear the decision of their own fate. The holy one, who cannot be deceived and will not be mocked, insists on the uttermost farthing of his just demands. He alone is to be trusted, and he is to be loved with a consuming affection. The young man "was grieved at that saying." Deep silence fell upon the company. His sorrow may have shown itself in tears; for he was a most sincere inquirer. Even the enemies said: "Master, we know that thou art true; and that thou teachest the way of God in truth; and that thou carest not for any man; for thou acceptest not the person of men." Jesus offered him a place among his apostles, who with prophets will yet stand immeasurably the highest of mankind. Had he surrendered all, Christ was ready to fulfill to him the promise of a hundred fold more in this life, and in the world to come life everlasting.

An honor far above an ordinary believer's was held out to him: to be numbered with Peter and Paul, and John and Moses, among the noblest benefactors of the race; to have his name now unknown handed down to the latest ages, as an associate and an apostle of Jesus; to have part in the first resurrection; to sit on thrones at the

judgment of the great day: but his houses and lands and station were too dear to him. At the first news of his conversion, he might look for expulsion from the Sanhedrin, and even from the synagogue. The cross meant poverty, reproach, peril of life, war from friends and kindred, and all that is formidable to the flesh.

A soul was hovering between heaven and hell. the crisis of destiny was being passed, eternal interests were in the balance, the inward conflict was severe. Jesus with supreme pity shining in his countenance, awaited the decision. The young man was left to the freedom of his own choice. Not an abatement of the conditions was offered; not a word of concession, to catch a conspicuous follower. Truth and duty are stern as Sinai. None can enter into the service of Christ, but with his own full, intelligent consent. The whole case was before this young man: and the decision was one for the judgment day. This was the opportunity of his life.

Eternal destinies are often decided in a short space: when light and motive concentrate upon the soul; and the question of a full surrender comes up with engrossing power; and the whole soul is attentive to the claims of God and duty; and their power is felt as never before. Such a period is the harvest season of eternity. Infinite interests may hang upon the conduct of an hour: they have often depended on the decision of a brief trial. "He went away sorrowful." He desired eternal life; but the terms were too severe. Dante well calls this the great refusal; as the highest position on earth and in heaven was declined for the brief enjoyments of a vain and transient life here. While the conflict in the mind of this young man was in progress, the Savior's countenance beamed with pity, and his eyes were fixed upon him in yearning solicitude: "looking upon him he loved him."

The twelve were beyond measure astonished at the uncompromising requirements made of this most sincere and seemingly humble and amiable inquirer. Their thoughts were full of the dignities and emoluments of an earthly kingdom. It was to them a revelation; that a follower of their master was to give up his riches, and abandon his

earthly prospects, and take the vow of perpetual poverty. It dashed their preconceived hopes and expectations to a rude downfall. They had been privately dividing among themselves the chief positions with occasional bitterness; and looking forward to an earthly exaltation, of which riches formed one of the most enticing features. Suddenly it was revealed; that the greatest obstacle on earth to the salvation of the soul lay in great possessions, which were "the snare of the devil." There can be no compromise between God and mammon. If a man's soul is too strongly wedded to worldly good, Christ's prescription is a total abandonment. Blessed are they, who can retain the ownership of large possessions, and account themselves stewards of the manifold grace of God.

But does this teach that no rich man can be saved? or no man whose soul cleaves to money as to life? He certainly teaches that the sacrifice of all is hard; but not impossible; hard as for a camel to go through a needle's eye; but still possible by the help of God. Had this young ruler followed the example of the agonized father, who prayed: "Lord help my unbelief" and, savingly convinced of the authority of the teacher, who demanded his absolute obedience, under a sense of his guilty inability to comply with the requirement, humbly asked for help in his weakness, he would have received that help instantly. Weak men and women have been able by the help of God to sacrifice everything, even life itself joyfully. God has "strengthened them with might by his spirit in the inner man." He can stiffen a broken reed, till it shall defy the tempest that uproots or breaks off the old gnarled oak. He can make a worm "thresh the mountains and beat them small, and make the hills as chaff and the wind shall carry them away and the whirlwind shall scatter them." "Let him trust in the Lord; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."

In the most natural manner possible, Peter uncertain about the nature of the rewards, which the Saviour promised, if riches and dignities were not included, asked: "Lo, we have left all and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?" Jesus answered: "Verily I say unto you, that

ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

This promise may point to grandeur inconceivable: yet is followed by the parable of the householder, which teaches, that they which were first hired into God's vineyard, and who had borne the burden and heat of the day, should be rewarded only "every man a penny," and not more than the others, who had been hired at the eleventh hour. By this teaching all their unholy contentions about the first and highest places was most wisely checked: and they were made to feel that, though they were the first enlisted, they might be less worthy in the sight of God than some of the last. Rewards were to be left to the unerring decision of the all-wise God, who will appoint to all his servants infinitely above their merit.

A single conversation of the Nazarene has often had a greater influence on society and the world, than all human influences combined. Six thousand years of human wisdom often do not teach as much, as a single sentence of the Galilean. His words on this occasion sank into the hearts of the apostles, and their fruit appeared in the sacrifices of the Pentecostal Church. The "vow of poverty, chastity and obedience," taken by so many thousands since, had its original here, The drift of his meaning may have been mistaken: false and exaggerated interpretations may have been made of his words: it still remains true; that he has done more to mould and influence the world, than all the beings together, who have lived upon it from the beginning.

He speaks; and the ages listen. His words like the bit of leaven will yet prevade and move the entire world. How tender was our Lord in dealing with his disciples: as he marked their deep disappointment in the terms of his service, he encourages them by stating the terms as mildly as possible. He addresses them as "little children;" the word used by him is a term of endearment, and repeats "how hard it is for them, that *trust* in riches to enter the kingdom of God!" and assures them that however great the sacrifice required; the help of God would be freely given to those who asked it, to make the sacrifice possible.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE CONVERSION OF ZACCHEUS. LUKE XIX.

The work of Augustus consisted in consolidating the provinces of the Roman Empire into a homogeneous body, and establishing uniformity of government throughout the whole. He extended the Roman census over a large part of the world, and established the system of tax collecting which the Ottoman Turks practice to this day in the same countries. If he were not the father of the method, he at least adopted it, and made it general. Time has shown that no more vicious arrangement could be devised, than that of selling out to the highest bidder the collection of the revenues of a province; leaving him aided by all the local authorities and magistrates, creatures of the administration, to extort all that he possibly could from the helpless victims in his power, having no chance of redress.

This method cannot fail to paralyze all industries, smother enterprise, lay an embargo on commerce, and educate a race of shuffling, cunning deceivers, who live chiefly by duplicity and fraud. The progress of the collecting officers was like the ravages of a desolating storm; and the keenest ingenuity was continually inventing methods of concealment, needed in order to escape intolerable extortion. The iron teeth, and the claws of brass, and the stamping with his feet were all matters of bitter experience.

For the people of Israel to come under the operation of such a system, was to descend from almost the freedom of a republic to the bondage of a grinding despotism. It is no wonder that an exasperation existed; which, aided by other causes, grew at length to the most fierce and bloody fanaticism. The tax and its mode of collection were the first grievance of the nation. The hideous, nondescript

beast of prophesy was sucking the blood, not of the slain; but of the living. The empire required one-tenth of all the grain, and two-tenths of the fruits which were the farmer's staple crop, olives, dates, figs and raisins. It taxed all industries in a like ratio, and even imposed a poll-tax upon females.

Such imposts annulled the tithing which the Mosaic law required for the temple; and demoralized the nation; reducing their religious observances to a minimum, driving their priests into secular pursuits, and depriving the temple of its necessary supplies. A native born Jew, who would lend himself a willing tool in carrying out this system of oppression, might almost as well be dead as alive. He was at once cast out of the synagogue: a penalty which in a free and protestant country, we can hardly appreciate. Like the papal interdict of the middle ages, it placed the man on whom it fell, in perfect isolation from his fellows. No Jew would buy from or sell to him. None would visit his family, or hold friendly intercourse with him or them; but avoid them as they would the pestilence; not saluting them in the way, or recognizing or aiding them; under peril of similar excommunication. This has ever been one of the most powerful weapons of the papacy; and has ever brought the most recreant offenders to reason.

Such was Zaccheus, an outcast from his own, and an associate of Gentiles and heathen only, and branded as infamous. He had however deliberately incurred all this scorn and loss from his great greed of money. He had not bartered his soul for gold; but had given up all that made life desirable for himself and family for lucre. Only the most sordid of men could make such a sacrifice; one whose god was gold. In pursuance of his object he had hauled men before the subservient magistrates, and by false accusation had taken the bread from the mouths of children, and comforts from the abodes of poverty; and thereby gained a hateful notoriety. He was breasting the current with an utter shipwreck of conscience, and fighting a battle in which he was a foe to his kind; and worse than a wild beast was preying upon his own species.

In order to apprehend his present state of feeling, we must consider the ordeal through which he was passing. Although regeneration is instantaneous in its occurrence, yet it is also the outcome of a process often long protracted. In the midst of this process was Zaccheus at this very season. The *deserved* scorn of our fellow-men may be made a powerful factor in producing intense conviction of ill-desert; inasmuch as it may be made to voice the condemnation of a holy God. If men hate us justly for our crimes, our sins continue ever before us. We are reminded at every turn, and through every moment, of their condemnation; and their judgments, concentrated like the rays of the sun through a glass, may, if God bless the means, rouse the sleeping conscience to hear the voice, that from the burning mount thunders its curse to the inmost soul. When God speaks the dead hear.

Zaccheus was a lonely man in the midst of the crowd. Cut off from the world, his soul was more open to communion with itself, and with the unseen; and he may have been in that most interesting attitude, when sick of the world, disgusted with himself, weary of life, and afraid of the future, he was ever hearing the still small voice of conscience swelling anon to thunder tones; and ever pondering deeply, "Will God cast off forever? will he be favorable no more? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" It was those whom the world cast out, that ever showed themselves the most ready to receive Jesus Christ in his true character. Instances of this are the penitent woman in the house of Simon the Pharisee, the crucified malefactor on Calvary, and the excommunicated publican.

A soul, oppressed with a sense of sin's desert, has eyes to see a Savior, while others are blind. Zaccheus heard with a wild throbbing of heart, that the holy prophet of Nazareth was approaching, and would pass through Jericho. Even demoniacs felt a strange attraction to his presence; and Zaccheus, determined to see and scrutinize him, ran before and climbed up into a sycamore tree, under which he would necessarily pass. It was in his mind who in all the city would have the high distinction of entertaining him. Himself a publican and sinner was not worthy that

he should enter under his roof. He may have thought that probably the purest of the resident priests might aspire to the honor.

As the company approached, he knew the illustrious prophet afar off, as soon as he saw him. There was no mistaking the central figure. His countenance once seen could never be mistaken, nor ever forgotten. A heavenly purity and elevation distinguished him at once far above what an earthly crown could bestow. His dignity and beauty were from himself, and not from outward trappings, which would rather have detracted from, than added to the lustre of his presence. To adorn the sun or beautify the sky were more easy than to add in conception to his meek and quiet majesty.

What was the astonishment of the publican, almost hidden in the leaves, to see the holy prophet cast up his eyes, radiant with truth and love, into the recesses of the tree, and call Zaccheus by name, and invite himself to be his guest during his stay! No orthodox Jew had thus kindly addressed him for years, or stepped over his threshold, or more than tolerated his presence. The tone of friendship and kindness had been almost forgotten. The words went to his heart. Paul's cry to the Philippian jailer, "do thyself no harm," contained no gospel statement, yet they pierced him like a sword. The words of Jesus contained a great truth, namely, that Christ was not ashamed of him.

The Arctic ice, that imprisons and crushes the stoutest ships, grinding them between its mighty floes, had been long gathering around his heart, sending hope and comfort to the bottom in its resistless surges; but the words of Jesus began to break it up. That infinite purity should be united with love to sinners is a mystery still unsolvable; but they spoke in every word, and shone in every look of the Nazarene. A new light began to dawn on Zaccheus; a revelation from heaven sent its rays down at once into the death-shade, in which he had been walking. The idea that the holy one might yet not reject him, once admitted to his soul, became a hope, and took immediate root; and brought forth buds; and bloomed blossoms; and yielded

almonds at once. The clouds of thick darkness which had so long covered him, presaging the eternal storm, parted, revealing the bow of promise set in the clouds as the token of the covenant. He made haste, came down and received him joyfully.

Our Lord intended to spend a little time in Jericho, and to be the guest of the despised publican. The citizens of the priestly city were all astonished at his selection, and none more so than Zaccheus himself. Severe comments passed freely over the incongruity of his choice; and the crowd felt, that all the instincts of their religion were violated. They had forgotten his vindication of like conduct formerly, when he chose a publican for an apostle. "The whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

His selection never agreed with the expectations of the people. When from the cross he was, in the very hour of his weakness, about to snatch one soul from the pit of woe, and take him with him to Paradise that very day: upon whom did his choice fall? Upon the thief dying at his side. He became the victor's trophy. He was the example to manifest that in the hour of weakness, Jesus was mighty to save. When he went to Nain to recall to life the widow's son in his very procession to the grave: whom did he select out of the attendant throng as the object from which he would display his equally effective power over the soul, to deliver it from its death in trespasses and in sins? It was the harlot who followed him into Simon's house, and washed his feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head.

Christ chose the subjects of his grace in his own infinitely wise and sovereign way. His mercy alighted on such as felt the burden of their sin, as a burden too heavy to be borne; and had nothing to commend them but the utterness of their need. He was not a teacher of the wise; but a Savior of the lost. His conduct was wholly in accord with all the teachings of the New Testament. The efforts of the Nazarene and of his forerunner, were simply toward a restoration of primitive Judaism. God had always been seeking among men not in-born righteousness; but true

and honest repentance. "Unto this man will I look, even to him that is of an humble and contrite heart, and that trembleth at my word."

We are not informed whether our Lord remained a day in Jericho, or tarried only for the night: neither are we informed at what time Zaccheus announced his memorable determination. It was not probably at his first introduction to Jesus; for it certainly was not a hasty, but a well considered conclusion; not adopted amidst the surprise of the moment; but after the struggle with the ruling sin had terminated, and a calm decision had been reached. A step so great and so far-reaching is not taken in a moment; neither does the adversary relinquish his hold, while he can retain it.

It was probably some time on the ensuing day that Zaccheus "stood," i. e. deliberately assumed a conspicuous position, before the Master and the assembly, and bound himself thus to the discharge of what he realized to be a solemn duty, in such a manner as to forbid the possibility of his receding. He was evidently determined, by every means which he could adopt, to fortify his resolution of amendment; and burn every bridge in his rear to prevent retreat.

The feature of this proceeding, which recommended it to the approval of the Master, and the notice of the ages was its unquestionable sincerity. He was not mocking the Holy One with solemn words or flattering lies; but declaring the fixed determination of his soul. Nothing but truth can attract the attention of Jesus Christ; and no evil did he more terribly condemn than the profession without corresponding conduct. The publican was as sincere in the relinquishment of his unlawful gains, as he ever had been in procuring them. He was reversing the whole course of his previous career. When sin is put away, it is rejected with energy and loathing. He was acting before the great judge of all, and making a record for the great day of accounts. We are assured that he did not fail in a single instance of rectifying his wrong; for each was inscribed in a handwriting of fire on the wall of memory; nor that he withdrew a single penny from the full proportion of his

promise. A promise made to man is too solemn to be voided; but made to God is kept to the full letter of the agreement. The excellence of true repentance is its sincerity and honesty; and of this Zaccheus was a signal example, not failing to execute what he proposed. Repentance without restitution is an empty farce. While the "accursed thing" is retained in our hand, or buried in the midst of our tent, the wrath of God is waxing every moment hotter. Deeds alone will satisfy the divine demands; not words nor promises, nor prayers.

His resolution embraces two points, one relating to the past, another to the present. With respect to the past it is: "If I have taken aught from any man by unjust accusation; I restore him fourfold." In this he refers to the law contained in Ex. 22, vs. 1: "If a man shall steal an ox or a sheep, and kill it or sell it, he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep." The thief of smaller sums is to restore fourfold. He openly classes himself as a thief in every such case. This is the right judgment in every case; and it will be God's judgment in the great day, when the heavens and earth shall pass away. All kinds of extortion, swindling, defrauding with the consent of the injured party or without it, are stealing; and nothing less than downright stealing; and stamp the actor as a thief. God will write it such upon the souls of transgressors with a finger of fire. He, who by cunning or force or superior wit, secures what is not of right his own, is a thief. He that takes advantage of the necessities of another to extort is a thief. He that buys what he knows that he cannot pay for, is a thief.

The man who retains the price of his iniquity in his hands may deceive himself, but he is wearing the mask of righteousness over the face of fraud and villainy. In the laws of Moses, God requires restitution to be made after the lapse of years, and when the party wronged is slumbering in the grave. In no case is the transgressor to retain his unrighteous gains, even when he who sustained the injury, and his heirs have passed away. God reckons to the uttermost farthing, and it is wise for men to do likewise. Truth transparent as the day, and honesty pure as the

light can alone pass inspection with him, "who seeth not as man seeth." Repentance is to be honest, thoroughgoing and decided, and as hearty as ever was the transgression.

The time will come, when unhallowed gains will burn the flesh; and the possessor will cast them away as Judas did the thirty pieces, which became too hot with the fire of hell for him to hold. In the dying hour earthly possessions will seem trifling and worthless, and it will appear passing strange, that the devil's trap, set with so slight a bait, should have caught our souls. The wild beast is snared, being ignorant; but men rush knowingly into the snares of the devil. The bait of a little gold takes them easily.

Well Zaccheus remembered every instance in which he had turned the official screw once too often upon the unhappy victim under the pressure of his mill. Glad was he to be rid of the burden by the payment of fourfold. Not that he thus atoned for his misdoing; blood divine, and not the payment of gold or silver, could obliterate the guilt. God's book of record, which will be opened before the great white throne, is the human memory, in which exists a transcript of every transaction of our lives. As a writing in invisible ink shines out in legible characters when exposed to the fire, so the fires of the last day will bring out every copy to be clear and visible in the record of our actions; and men will live their lives over again, as it were, when standing before the burning throne. The voice of conscience, before still and small, swells into the sound of a trumpet exceeding loud, so that all the people in the uttermost part of the camp trembled and said: "Let not God speak with us, lest we die."

Every command of the decalogue is to be interpreted with the same rigor; and is exceeding broad, reaching to the thoughts and intents of the heart. Our Savior's explanations of them in his sermon on the mount are just according to the decisions of an awakened conscience respecting our own transgressions. Causeless anger and likewise hatred and envy are the beginnings of murder; they are eggs which, if they reach their consummation, will each

break out into a viper and work destruction. Malicious hatreds constitute nine-tenths of human life. His teachings respecting falsehood are more terrible still. If there is a sin which God abhors more than another, it is a lie. It is the root of all evil, the germ of hell. A lie is always an afterthought; the truth is before our minds whenever we yield to falsehood. Every oath or affirmation is a confession that our word is not to be taken without confirmation. "Let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil." How deep he saw into the human heart! We should search ourselves by the light which he gives, knowing that the ordeal of the last day will be according to his interpretations, when the eyes of the judge, like a flame of fire, shall pierce to the bottom of our being in condemnation and irreversible doom.

With respect to the second point in his avowed determination, nothing could better express the very spirit of Christian philanthropy. As to the property which was rightly his own without a shadow upon the title, he would divide by an even division with the suffering poor; making his own selection of objects, and directing the distribution of the funds himself. This was indeed loving others as himself, doing to others as he would desire to be treated, if circumstances were changed. The widest interpretation of the law of love could neither demand nor suggest more than this; this fulfilled the requirement. While our hearts burn with admiration of the decision, and the spirit which dictated it; we remember that Zaccheus was but a mirror reflecting the glory of another. We take knowledge of him, that he had been with Jesus. What more than magic influence attended the presence of the man of Nazareth? He was the friend of publicans and sinners; but his association transformed them; the hard-hearted publican became a benefactor of his kind; and the penitent Magdalene, the very ideal of purity and love. This companionship, at which the Pharisees scoffed, was the greatest glory of the wonderful personage moving among them.

It is not considered strange, that a man should give up everything he has, to save his life. Instances occur from time to time. Some time in the fifties the ocean steamer *Central America* went down in the mid-Atlantic, on which were many returning forty-niners from California, each with his belt of gold dust or nuggets; and we heard from the survivors, that when it sank, its cabin floor was literally paved with gold, which the miners willingly abandoned in order to save their lives. The result of the labor of years was cast away as being no better than the dust beneath their feet. In their eyes gold was nothing compared with life.

Ought the sacrifice of money and property to be considered, when there is a question about the saving of the soul? Is not the soul worth the sacrifice? *Zaccheus* was in earnest in his contest against the sin, which had enslaved him; and had made him forfeit the esteem of the world, and peril his soul's salvation. His treatment of it was heroic. Of course all was done spontaneously without suggestion from any quarter, and not in the way of accumulating merit; but in order to give himself the victory over an idol to which he had sacrificed everything, and a lust which had degraded him into a wretch no better than the god he worshipped; and had dried up his sympathies, and hardened his heart. He was not required to abandon his calling: "let every man remain in the same calling, in which he was called." Jesus unquestionably placed a similar estimate on worldly possessions, and so will all of us in the solemn hour when we part from them forever. Success in amassing property feeds the appetite till it becomes a passion, and absorbs the whole being. Jesus Christ lays down no rule, that shall apply to all men alike; he claims the chief place in our affection without a rival.

There were among the Pentecostal converts those who gave all their possessions; but we learn from Acts v: vs. 4, that this was not enforced upon any one; neither was there an authoritative command requiring it. Whatever was done was done spontaneously, and from the impulse of the individual: and the fact is simply recorded as a matter of history, rather than a rule to regulate the conduct of to-day.

Neither is it proper that believers in Christ should renounce all interests in the world, its business, its enterprises, in the advance of science, and the progress of invention, and the worldly improvements which may all be factors in regenerating society. The church is to avoid on the one hand the worldly spirit, which is the most formidable foe of godliness; and steer clear on the other hand of such indifference to earthly things, as will tend to a paralysis of worldly activities, and a stagnation of absolute inertia, such as was once esteemed as holy living by the anchorites, and recluses of the middle ages.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE RAISING OF LAZARUS

Our Lord's miracles became more and more striking and impressive to the very close of his ministry; and the last public one recorded, is the one, that exhibits him as the resurrection and the life. Among his friends and even among the twelve he had his favorites. This is itself an evidence of his perfect humanity: we not being able to attribute a preference of this kind to absolute divinity. Socially, and in the way of unreserved friendship, he felt a greater interest in some individuals and certain families.

We can indeed discover a reason for his preference for Peter, as he was a man of the most ardent affection. With great weaknesses and faults, his love for Christ, and this alone made a rock of him. In John we see a depth of feeling and a profounder judgment than is commonly encountered. About James his brother we know less; but in mental constitution, and in affection he was probably much like his brother. Probably also in every place which our Lord frequented, he found a family in which he not only was perfectly at home as a man; but whose members manifested the strongest human friendship, and received him with a more unreserved confidence than others. His preferences for such families and individuals exhibits strongly the human side of his personality, his capacity of enjoying the delights of social life, and the charms of human friendship.

Such was his attachment to the family of Bethany. He loved Martha the bustling business woman; he loved Mary the quiet, intensely affectionate sister; none appreciated him more than she; he loved Lazarus; for Lazarus loved him better than life, at the time of this account. Lazarus, the youngest of the family had been languishing in sickness; but for the love of Jesus, they sent no message to

him, until death was imminent; and then they made no request for his presence. And this, because his coming, except at the regular feasts, when the whole nation assembled, would have been the signal for an outburst against him, and an attempt upon his life.

The loving sisters had no desire to induce him into a visit, in which his life would certainly be jeopardized. And therefore they waited until the end was fast approaching, before the messenger was dispatched; who returned with the assurance that "this sickness was not unto death," which to the sisters meant that their brother should not die; but that the master would come and heal him: for they seemed to feel that his personal presence was necessary. The Savior added other words also: that this sickness should be for the glory of God, and especially for the glory of the son of man: but before the messenger returned or soon after, death terminated the whole proceeding.

They perhaps hoped to see Jesus himself in company with the returning messenger, as the mission had been so timed: that at the ordinary rate of travel, he could have been present before the final catastrophe. But their hopes seem to have gone out with the extinction of the life, which they had so assiduously watched; and the sadness of a disconsolate bereavement settled with unalleviated gloom upon them. Death has in it something so fearful, so final, so immutably decisive; that when it supervened, all idea of relief vanished. How often they had said to one another, if he were only here: why does he not come? Can it be possible that he will not come?

Martha was of a class to be impatient and full of worry: to Mary it belonged to say less; but to be more absorbed in uncomplaining anguish; but both were doomed to see the last ray of hope expire in the utter darkness of the tomb. The end came at last; the master appeared to have preferred his own safety; and to have chosen not to venture to the dangerous neighborhood of Jerusalem. How little they knew of his sympathy, which felt with them every pang; and counted and treasured every tear!

He says to the disciples: "I am glad for your sakes, that I was not there: to the end that ye might believe." Had

I been there, I could not have resisted the tears and prayers of those mourning sisters; and Lazarus would not have died, and been brought back from the grave. The full force of the anguish of our distress he feels by sympathy; and the piercing keenness of all our suffering is fully realized and endured by him; our agonized prayer he cannot resist; but is overcome by it. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth."

We are told that he abode two days still in the place where he was; before he signified his intention of going into Judea. The object of this delay unquestionably was to subject the faith of the sisters to the severest test possible. A firm confidence on their part would have mitigated or removed their sorrow altogether. They had his word, "this sickness is not unto death;" and this delay was calculated to reveal to them, how far they were from a child-like trust in him. They were evidently overwhelmed by their affliction; and in it possessed little sustaining faith. How often they repeated to each other, if he had been here our brother had not died.

It is ever thus: "when the Lord cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" In the best of Christians not more than a mustard seed faith is found in the day of trial. Had we faith; sorrow, suffering; and death itself would have no sting. These mourners almost felt at times as though Christ had deceived them; saying "not unto death;" while yet their brother died. No death was more closely scrutinized, to distinguish it from trance; and to determine its unmistakable reality. Could he have deceived, or been himself deceived when he said: "this sickness is not unto death?"

The next point in the history is the danger of venturing into Judea at a time when the leaders were not restrained by the presence of the multitude, among whom the Nazarene had many believing friends. When Jesus would break the news of the death of Lazarus to the twelve, and his own intention of visiting Bethany; so intimidated were they as not to be able to understand any allusion; and they did not comprehend his purpose until it was stated in the broadest manner. They could not think of Jerusalem without a

shudder; and it was a fixed determination with them not to risk a visit. "Goest thou thither again?" sounds as if the idea could not be admitted at all.

And when our Lord told them, that walking in the path of duty was like walking in the light of day, in which a man would not be liable to stumble; and that refusing the call of God was like walking in the night, when a man would continually stumble; and that he felt the call of God: they only reluctantly yielded to his expressed will. Faith was wanting in them, as well as in the sisters. In reading the graphic words, we can almost see the conclave standing with eyes drooped to the ground, and heads shaking in reluctance, and bodies motionless; until Thomas exclaims at last, seeing that the master *would* go: "let us also go:" our Master is going into death; and "we will die with him." And to this all agreed. The doubter, like Thomas, always looks on the darkest side, as expecting the very worst, and therefore courting failure. Cold and doubting Thomas, however, had a love for Jesus, which led him in time to die for his master indeed.

Jesus was certainly in no haste to reach Bethany, and the disciples traveled slowly and sadly; "Jesus went before them, and as they followed, they were afraid." The party did not arrive in the neighborhood of Bethany; until Lazarus had lain four days in the tomb. This delay was intended to test still more severely the fluctuating faith of the mourning sisters. Having arrived, he stopped without the village, resting perhaps under the shade of some one of the numerous fig trees abounding there, and by some casual passer probably, sent to the house notice of his arrival; having learned from him the date of the death.

Martha was of course the first to receive the news; and unmindful of her sister and indeed of all else, she rushed to meet him at the place where he had stopped. Jesus inquired for Mary; he "called for" her; he remembers each one. The details of the communication to her by her sister are exceedingly interesting, and life-like. She followed of course as soon as she learned his presence; and both gave utterance to the sentiment which they had so often repeated to each other; till their minds were filled with it: "Lord if thou hadst

been here, our brother had not died;" a sentiment expressing faith, presumption and unbelief together. Martha added strangely: "but even now I know, that whatever thou shalt ask of God, God will give it thee."

The characteristic difference between the sisters appears in this: that Martha was able to continue a conversation with Jesus; while Mary lay at his feet, dissolved in crushing grief. And we hear in Martha's words a faint presentiment of relief in some way yet to be made known. The first object of the Master was to bring out and strengthen true faith; so he says to Martha: "Thy brother shall rise again." Martha, not seeming to have any definite hope of his return to life, replies: "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

The Old Testament is sufficiently explicit on all points of doctrine and duty; all the doctrines of the New Testament indeed are contained in the one book of Genesis. And however Sadducean materialism might mystify the plain truth; Christ unanswerably proved the resurrection of the dead from the book of Exodus. To enlighten her and all future believers, and to strengthen her faith, the Lord gave utterance to these memorable words: "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth on me, shall never die." As much as to say, there are no laws of nature; there are no forces that can operate apart from my will. All the processes which take place, and shall at any time take place, occur from no tendencies or forces of their own, separate from my own will. That is the sole energy in the universe. "I am the resurrection and the life;" all centers in me "Believest thou this?"

My delay has shown how weak your faith is; can you now grasp the mighty idea of my supreme dominion? Christ did not control agencies or laws; there are no agencies or laws separate from his omnipotent will. She was ready to confess that she believed him to be the Christ, the predicted Savior; but she had never comprehended the boundless extent of his supremacy. Miracles were to him as easy as ordinary operations. The greatest were easy as the least: and difficult or impossible had no meaning

with him. His nature was without bounds or limits. All that we can say respecting her, is that she saw that Jesus claimed to be infinitely above all that she had ever thought or conceived; and she was willing to acknowledge him all that he professed to be; but the light was still struggling with darkness within her.

At this juncture precisely it was that Mary made her appearance; and her utter disconsolateness and weeping, with the weeping of the Jews who came with her, greatly touched the sympathies of Jesus; and asking "Where have ye laid him?" he seemed to make an ineffectual effort to restrain himself; and with a great sob or groan he finally burst into tears, and went with them groaning and weeping to the grave. The sight of this led some of the company to say: "Behold how he loved him."

They were in error here, and might have said, behold how he loves *them*. He was not grieving over the loss of Lazarus; he was weeping with the mourners; they were the ones who excited his sympathies. His tears were flowing for them. Unseen by us but ever near he still feels our sorrows as his own, and suffers when we are crushed by affliction. Angels of glory look on in wonder, and say: when they mark his reluctance to grieve us, his tenderness in all that he sends upon us, and his evident sympathy with our sorrows, *behold how he loves them!* Anything that touches his people touches the apple of his eye. To believe that all things work for our good, that God is doing all that he wisely can for our sanctification, that he feels our agonies as intensely as we ourselves do, and sees that they are the lightest that the case admits of, and that in the end we shall thank him more heartily for our afflictions, than for the choicest and at present most prized mercies of our lives, is just what we are to be assured of.

A real faith will make our sufferings a "light affliction" not to be compared with "the eternal weight of glory"; but necessary as a means of "working" out the result. They are but the cutting and the polishing of the gem: the fire that melts the gold, that it may assume its shape and lustre.

The tomb was probably a natural cave, closed by a large stone serving for a cover or a door. Jesus at once commanded: "roll ye away the stone." Martha's objection shows two things: that her sharp eyes had detected evidences of incipient decomposition, which prevented any doubt of the death; and that her faith was only intermittent, like an expiring taper flashing up its light for an instant, and the next sinking into an almost darkness. But when the Master referred to his promise that this death should be "for the glory of God that the son of man might be glorified thereby," if she would believe; the truth began to dawn upon her; and with a heart throbbing with high hope she acquiesced. At the last she believed, and the heavy burden of stone was rolled away from her soul; as the stone was rolled away from the tomb, which was not done until she joyfully consented.

In no haste, but with the most solemn deliberation, Jesus standing before the gaping tomb lifted up his eyes: but it is not proper to say that he prayed. His words were words of thanksgiving, his lightest wish was ever heard. These words he spoke for the benefit of those who stood by; that they might believe that God had sent him; and that the Father and Son were in inseparable concert, and indissoluble connection. The miracles of Christ were wrought without prayer: in entire contradistinction from all the prophets, who had gone before. They were but servants; Christ was a Son in his own house. This is not denying that he prayed over every act of his ministry, and event of his life. His life was an unbroken series of prayer, and this is an affecting evidence of his perfect humanity; it was only as a man that he could pray. The history shows that he prayed; and was eased and relieved by it, as we are.

Then amid the awful silence and suppressed breathing of the company, the voice, which will at the last day, awake the slumbering dead, called aloud, "Lazarus come forth," while every eye was strained to catch any movement, that might take place within the cave. And in very deed, the sheeted dead stood at its open door, unable to take a single step on account of the bandages which swathed each limb separately, and also wrapped them in one binding; he

had yet been able to throw down his feet to the floor, and to arise from the shelf of rock, on which he had been deposited, and thus to stand at the entrance. No one stirred to assist him, being nearly paralyzed with astonishment, nor daring to interfere; and we know not how long they stared, while every tongue was palsied. After a considerable interval Jesus commanded: "loose him, and let him go." Indeed until the word was given, it was not for man to raise his hand. Undoubtedly the astonished gaze of the bystanders was not directed to Lazarus chiefly; in their presence was one stronger than death and the grave; himself the "wonderful" of heaven and earth.

Lazarus had lain in the grave four days, after the closest examination made to determine his real decease. Had he lain there four years or forty years; until the dust had returned to the earth as it was; yet at the word of Jesus, he would have come forth. He calls "things that are not, and they are." "Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming in the which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth: they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." "He has the keys of death and of hell" i. e. of the grave and of the invisible world. He will bring the body up from the grave, and the soul from the world of spirits; and reunited they shall stand before "the great white throne;" while heaven and earth affrighted "flee away, and no place be found for them."

That was a solemn hour when the grave gave back its captive; heaven never came nearer to earth than then. The interest centered in the hated and despised Nazarene. In that little company some looked upon him with unconcealed dislike; "and went and told the Pharisees all things that he had done."

Our Lord's avoidance of publicity is very marked in this connection; as well as in every act of his career. He did not enter the village of Bethany when he arrived, nor did he pass through it on his way to the sepulchre: and it is doubtful if any of the residents of the place, beyond the bereaved sisters were present at the tomb. The party that heard and saw consisted of the twelve disciples, the two

sisters, and the visitors from the adjoining city, who had come to sympathize with, and comfort them in their distress. He avoided every movement, that might have brought together a curious crowd.

The reappearance of the deceased upon the streets of Bethany was the public proof of the reality of the miracle. This was according to his constant procedure; instead of rallying spectators; he tolerated the presence of as few as possible. The passage of the Red Sea witnessed by three millions, yet comes to us certified but by two eye witnesses, Moses and Joshua: the account needs not the additional confirmation of multiplied observers. The world receives history on the testimony of a few. Future ages will rest their belief upon the word of two or three true and impartial historians. Certainty can not be increased by the multiplication of testimony. The conduct of the Nazarene was ordered by the highest wisdom: evidently superhuman.

Many therefore of the Jews, which came to comfort the mourners, and saw that which Jesus did, believed. They not only saw the dead come forth at his word from the chamber of the grave; but they saw his love for those that trusted in him; the tenderness of his sympathy; they saw how evidently the Father owned him; and what high and lofty fellowship he enjoyed with God in heaven; and they believed. They saw in him divine power and divine love; these draw souls now. This signal opening of the doors of the tomb, and rolling away the stone took place not as a private benefit to the weeping sisters; but "for the glory of god; that the son of man might be glorified thereby;" and every incident of the marvelous scene reveals his glory, and installs him as sovereign in our hearts; as well as of those who beheld.

The full roll of his mighty works is not complete without the addition of this miracle. This world is an immense grave-yard; it is thickly sown with withered hopes; families exist in mere fragments everywhere; and for six thousand years, man has been returning to the dust from which he was taken. This mighty Savior himself passed through

the iron gate, and opened it for our conviction and satisfaction. Every thing, that brings tidings to us of the future life and transient dominion of the grave, goes to our hearts.

No attempt was ever made by the opposing party to deny or impugn this glorious miracle, as had occurred when the man born blind received his sight. On the contrary the determination to put Lazarus also to death, because that by reason of him many believed on Jesus, was an open confession that the whole thing took place actually as reported; and was too glaring and well founded to be denied. This indeed was the climax of all the wondrous works. After the message of Jesus that "this sickness is not unto death" the friends did not admit the fact of death until it was past all question. Of nothing was Martha better apprised, than that her brother had seen corruption. Unbelievers in ages long after may sneer and suggest trick or collusion: the enemies knew there was no such evasion. When they decreed the death of Lazarus they had shown themselves possessed of sharp wits, determined to fight truth with falsehood; but they never ventured a denial. They freely said: "this man *doeth* many miracles;" *their* testimony has an especial force. The men, who could say that the disciples came and stole the body of Jesus while the soldiers slept, could have framed a denial, had there been room for it, of the real resurrection of Lazarus.

The whole scene must have presented vividly to the mind of Jesus his own burial now impending after a short interval of probably less than a month: the rocky cavern, the few mourners, the great stone rolled to the door, the enswathed body, the quickening to life, and the coming forth from the chamber of the grave, all so similar to what was to be enacted in his own case after a very few days, must have clothed the whole scene with an indiscribable interest and solemnity to him. As a man he instinctively recoiled; and the nearness of the end probably contributed to the ineffable sadness and tenderness of his demeanor through the mournful, joyful occurrences.

The cottage of Bethany was for one night at least the very antechamber of heaven; and a picture of the joy of reunion with those that are gone before, and are awaiting us upon the other shore. It is no matter of wonder, that those familiar went away believing in Jesus: and that there were "many" such.

CHAPTER XXVII.

TRIUMPHAL ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM.

The only occasion, on which our Lord made any approach towards what might appear the assumption of the kingly estate, was at his last entry into the holy city. The triumphal procession seems to have been wholly unexpected by his disciples. Had he been a mere party leader, such a demonstration would have been matter of keen and cautious discussion; and shrewd worldly policy would have dictated preparation to take advantage of the popular feeling; so as to reap all the gain that might result from an opportune show of strength. This was the most important worldly step of his whole career; and yet his followers were wholly unadvised of what was coming; and had no plan, according to which they could follow up success, and retain what they might be able to secure. But this was no partisan movement. After the council of the Jews had solemnly determined to put him to death, our Lord was resolved that they should reject him as King of Israel, and execute him in that character.

The prophets had abundantly foretold him as King; five centuries before, Zecharias seemed to behold this present pageant, to hear the shouting; to note the two animals, and plainly to describe the meek and lowly King. When prophecies are fulfilled, the actors unconsciously perform their parts with all the freedom possible; not learning until afterwards that their role had been long previously arranged for them: God's foreknowledge establishes the liberty of creatures, and secures their free and unbiassed action. God is able to manage his universe without infringing the powers of subsidiary agents.

We note on this occasion:

1. The crowd, which at a passover was simply immense; reaching to the neighborhood of three millions at least. It

was at this time as large as ordinary, if not larger: the expected presence of Jesus was ever an attraction: and it was felt that the period of decision respecting his claims had arrived. A deeper interest never centered about the holy city, which overflowed with visitors; until the sides of the surrounding mountains, as far as the temple could be seen, were occupied; and the adjacent villages beyond the summits even, were crowded.

As Jesus approached, he was attended by a vast concourse from Jericho, conspicuous among whom were the blind men, whom he had restored to sight, and who were loud and constant in their expressions of gratitude. Another attendant, whose presence excited still greater interest, was Lazarus, returned from a four days' sojourn in the land of spirits. Perhaps there were others beside, who had been examples of his healing power in days by-gone: the man born blind, ever a bold confessor, and others from Galilee, or Perea, who were living monuments of his divine ability.

Such a retinue never attended king or conqueror before of grateful and adoring followers. We are not surprised to read of the irrepressible curiosity "to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead." A victor may come leading captives in chains; Jesus was accompanied by many attached by bonds stronger than of iron. A great stream of people, without concert, but drawn by the absorbing interest of the late events, was flowing out of the city and its environs, as soon as the news of his arrival reached Jerusalem. "The whole city was moved;" and never had David or a king of his line such an ovation in store for him, as awaited the humble prophet of Nazareth, as soon as he should make his appearance.

Strange developements might soon ensue; and a mighty stress oppressed every member of the Jewish nation; as though he was aware that the crisis of his own destiny and of the national life were at hand. The doom of centuries was poising then in the balance; and the fate of the Jewish people was on the eve of decision. The very air was heavy with doom; and the hour was nigh, on which pivoted the mighty frame-work of the government of God

over worlds other than ours. The clock of destiny was pointing to the hour, for which the ages had waited; and on which depended interests wide as the universe and vast as eternity.

The feeling toward the great teacher had reached a climax; rising to a flood-tide, it dispossessed every other subject, and engrossed all minds: and Jerusalem was to become the valley of decision. Greater interests gathered about this spot and this present time, than ever concentrated elsewhere: and every heart was oppressed with a sense of it. Unseen spirits also hovered thick; and heaven was for a time forsaken, for the scenes of intenser interest then enacting on this small globe.

2. The animal, selected to carry him, was an unbridled colt, the foal of an ass, with its mother following. The animal usual on such occasions, is the fiery, chafing steed. King or warrior best exhibits himself upon the horse, made as it were for the very purpose of martial display. "Hast thou given the horse strength? hast thou clothed his neck with thunder? Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper? the glory of his nostrils is terrible. He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength; he goeth on to meet the armed men. He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted; neither turneth he back from the sword. The quiver rattleth against him, the glittering spear and the shield. He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage; neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet. He saith among the trumpets, ha, ha; and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting." In the scriptures, the horse is the symbol of war. The meek and lowly king came sitting upon a colt, the foal of an ass. On it never man sat and never again did a rider use it. As the tomb in which he lay was never used by another; the alabaster box of ointment never shared by another; so this animal was given up by its owner to the Lord, who had need of him. The unbroken animal suffered the garments of the disciples to be cast upon him, and his rider to mount; and then took his way in the lead, leaving his dam behind; and stepped for-

ward without hesitation upon the garments laid in the way, and the branches of palm trees strewed in the road.

Those who know how difficult it is to make an unbroken animal set his foot upon anything that hides the solid ground, can appreciate the docility of this unbridled and raw beginner. With no other burden would he have made his progress amidst the shouts and gesticulations of a closely surrounding multitude. This scene seems almost a burlesque of human greatness. Here was a king, entering his capital in triumph; the ground was not good enough for the colt that bore him to step upon; palms of victory and clothing from the bodies of his followers carpeted it; but the rider was the prince of peace; not carried over ground soaked in human gore, or wetted with the tears of widows and orphans, and trampling the vanquished with the hoofs of war; but the meek and lowly king of hearts. As he passed down the long slope of Olivet, he was in full view from the temple, the higher portions of the city, and sides of the mountain thickly dotted with the tents of passover worshippers; surrounded by an innumerable throng, and hailed with a triumph such as Jerusalem had never seen given in her palmiest days.

The irrepressible shout arose on every side: "Hosanna to the son of David," equivalent to the English, God save the king. The disciples, in full expectation of an immediate worldly kingdom, first raised the cry, which the whole crowd with united voice took up: until mount and valley reverberated hosanna. And even the children in the city caught the enthusiasm, and soon after filled the temple with the shout.

Jesus accepted the title, approved its application, presented himself as "the son of David" in legitimate succession, justified the designation to the demurring Pharisees, and received the homage of the people as their Messiah. Never had returning warrior or victorious king such welcome on this *via triumphalis*; and he plainly acknowledged himself to be all that the enthusiastic multitude proclaimed him as being. Never asserting his rights nor insisting ("he shall not strive nor cry") he admitted and proclaimed his

real descent and his unquestionable prerogative as king, ordained before prophets were inspired, or earthly thrones erected.

During this progress, at the point in the road where the full view of the city bursts upon the eye, the sight of it awakened the deepest emotions of his soul. Though surrounded by rejoicing myriads, with the air full of congratulation and acclaim, he first burst into tears, and then fell into uncontrollable weeping. He saw the insincerity of all this demonstration, and how fiercely these same would soon call for his blood; he beheld the temple, now glittering in the sunlight, "left unto them desolate," abandoned of all its holy influences; the people having repulsed their own Messiah, given up to judgment in this world, and doom in the future, and he wept profusely. His words were heavy with tears and loaded with groans of anguish, and were sufficient to annihilate the last vestige of hope for a temporal kingdom.

Results were present to his view, and his eye beheld the dark future "naked and opened." The things which belonged to their peace were his own personality, and his office work as Savior; which things, so far from appreciating, Jerusalem was about to repudiate with a rancor and fury which are the wonder of time. Just at this moment, amid a seeming reception of him (but how empty and false!), she was hastening to a rejection that would continue for twenty centuries, and involve unborn millions. The passions of depraved humanity had been coming to a boiling heat for three years and more, and were soon to outdo the wildest suggestions of diabolical temptation, and enact the very climax of sin, beyond which evil cannot go.

The Jewish people of that generation were privileged above the men of all time; but with the high favor accorded to them, there attended a measureless responsibility. To whom God gives much, of them he will require the more. Prophets and kings had desired to see the things which they saw, and to hear the things which they heard; but had died without the sight and the hearing. Forty centuries of mortals had been swallowed in the tomb of time, looking for and hasting unto the fulfillment of God's

great promise. The whole creation had groaned together in unalleviated anguish, sick at heart and faint with longing. Unto these was reserved the unparalleled blessedness of beholding and hearing the things "into which angels desire to look."

A curse that cannot be exhausted in this world impends over those who fail "to know" the time and receive the lesson. The heights of the most exalted privilege overhang the precipice of the deepest doom; it takes but a step from the summit of light to dash upon the rocks below, hard by which rolls the black lake of perdition. The men of that day seem to have thought that the Messiah would be revealed in such a way as to make mistake of him impossible; that their leaders were infallible; that the "coming one" would assert and establish his own claims as men do; would assume the supremacy by force, and, what was most important, bring national independence with him, and a greater worldly glory and empire than had been enjoyed in the reign of David or Solomon. The times demanded such a Messiah; and they considered the desires and needs of the people more than they did the oracles of the scripture. Their worldliness disdained a Savior from sin, and seized eagerly the inspired announcements of the glory and greatness of the future.

The refusal of Jesus to be made king seems to have been the pivot, on which his rejection turned. He remained at the very foot of the ladder of worldly rank during his whole career; discouraged ever all aspirations of the kind in his followers; and did not seem capable of an ambitious or even patriotic emotion. His teachings were confined wholly to the sphere of religion and morals; and nothing else was seemingly worthy of a thought.

God does not furnish evidence that shall be compulsory, and that shall render dissent impossible. The light that shines in a dark place, shall increase, if we follow it, to the perfect day; but men are left to the unforced decisions of their own liberty. If they stumble at the rock of offence, they shall fall and be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it shall grind him to powder. A responsi-

bility, heavier than globes, was on the men of that generation; it was inseparable from the light and the advantages which they enjoyed.

In the interlocutory contest that ensued for the next three days, there was from first to last but one question: that [was the Messiahship of Jesus. From the first encounter when the leaders came asking: "by what authority doest thou these things?" all dispute resolved itself into this; art thou he that should come? and is the Messiah to be a divine personage? This was the question of the hour. No other question came before the nation then assembled in debate of this one point. Pharisees and Sadducees forgot their mutual enmity, and united, as did Pilate and Herod after; and the parties stood; on the one side Jesus, and on the other the world. For more than three years the light had been shining in their midst; and the all engrossing subject now took possession of every mind. No one among the millions was indifferent or unconcerned. The matter pressed for instant decision: the temple was the tribunal: and this passover was the time.

Such was the intercommunication of the Jewish people, by reason of all the males assembling thrice every year at Jerusalem; that all that occurred anywhere in the holy land, was soon known to every inhabitant; and all sides of every subject of interest were familiar to every mind. The whole life, acts, and teachings of the Nazarene were vividly before every individual, and were public property. Our own newspapers and telegraphs post us more quickly; but no better nor more thoroughly on all matters of interest.

And there never was a crisis; not that of the Protestant succession in England nor our own 1864, that stirred so deeply and excited so intensely. Every man felt called upon to act; as though the fate of the nation depended on himself alone.

During these three memorable days, the ministry of the Baptist and his testimony came into review. His very name awakened the keenest sympathy in every heart. The shortness of his ministry and its miserable ending had enshrined him in the memories of the people. They would

have stoned to death the luckless man, who should dare to cast a doubt upon his divine mission. He, as it were, passed before their view again, and solemnly pointed to the Nazarene, and reiterated his testimony that Jesus was "before" him and all mankind, the son of God, the sin-bearer of the world, the being for whom himself was not worthy to loose the shoe, or perform the most menial service.

The enemies of the Savior were forced to admit that John was a prophet sent of God; and that his mission was to designate Jesus, a witness to his messiahship. The unwilling admission was wrung from them in the presence and hearing of the nation, an admission to which all assented without a contradictory voice.

And then the testimony of the miracles had become louder and more convincing. The restoration of the man born blind extorted acknowledgement from the most bitter opposers. This bold confessor and first one "cast out" for the sake of Jesus, was doubtless present, and fearless by adding his testimony to that of the two from Jericho. Lazarus was also before them, whose resurrection none pretended to question. The miracles had become more brilliant and mighty to the last: they were beyond dispute; as the living subjects of them were present. These works demonstrated the approval and sanction of the Father, and were the indubitable testimony of God himself.

And further, the very voice of God from heaven spoke again while Jesus was teaching in the courts of the temple. Some said that it thundered; others said: "an angel spake to HIM." It was but repeating what had occurred on the banks of Jordan three years before, and bringing into vivid remembrance the announcement: "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased." Here was an accumulation of evidence most ungainsayable, crowded into these three days. God sent down a full beam of heavenly light, fresh from the infinite glory as it were, to lead them to a right decision. The whole case was before them; the claims of Jesus, sustained by the testimony of the Baptist, by the most indisputable miracles, and by the voice

of God himself speaking from the skies. If all these will not convince, no conceivable proof will. According to Christ's own conception, so evident and fully attested was his mission; that if the disciples had kept silence, the very stones would have opened their dumb mouths, and proclaimed his standing; as the rocky tomb did in time open its cavernous throat, and shout its hosanna.

And now he was master of the temple, dictator of the occasion: the conscience of the people was with him, and on his side.

God has endued the will of man with that natural liberty that it can refuse assent to the clearest truth; resist the holiest motives; and do despite to the spirit of all grace. We can come into contest with God himself, and rush upon the bosses of his buckler. It can shut the eyes against sun-light certainty; it can harden the heart against the most loving influences. The fathers of Israel rejected Jehovah at the very foot of Sinai, unaffected by all the wonders of that theophany: as they could not abide the character of the God there revealed.

The most terrible exhibitions of human sin have appeared in the very blaze of the clearest light, stimulated by the light itself. The innate enmity of the human heart against God does not manifest its rancor, until God is met face to face, a sin-hating ruler. When this view is gained, nothing can surpass the energy of the opposition that rises, revealing "the hidden man of the heart." The very climax of the iniquity of the race was reached, when Jesus Christ was rejected; sin could do no more; hell could suggest no worse. The distinction which will designate this earth in the coming ages will be: the world that crucified the Son of God, without an accusation, without a witness, without a trial. Under his incognito they had identified the being who is the impersonation of right and duty, law and conscience.

No light, no revelation could have prevented his crucifixion. This rejection was no sudden act of the nation; the opposition to Jesus had been growing from the first beginning of his ministry, which opened with the cleansing of the temple; and made bitter enemies from the very first.

His first miracle at Jerusalem which is particularly related, roused an implacable hatred, leading them to attempt to put him to death for what could by no logic be counted a capital offence. This hatred kept pace with his increasing notoriety; every successive mighty work seemingly arousing a more vengeful hostility.

Nazareth had long before rejected him; Capernaum became tired of him; Chorazin and Bethsaida turned a deaf ear to his teachings; Herod advised him to leave his territory; he met everywhere with rebuffs through his whole course; and was obliged at last to conceal himself. His claims were brought before every individual of the nation, and were passed upon by each. All had had abundant time, as well as abundant light. They were not surprised into a step, which they would afterwards regret and recall. It was not the act of a portion of the people; but of the nation.

We sometimes attribute the entire blame to the priests and elders and scribes; and indeed these were forward in promoting the result. But every man in his place was active on the one side or the other; there was no indifference, and but one side; the other side was silent.

It is in great crises involving general interests and affecting every family, that every man utters his voice and casts his influence into the scale. So it was in the present instance. This rejection was the solemn act of the nation, in which every individual participated, being for or against it; they were never more united in any act of their whole history. "Not this man; but Barabbas" was their deliberate choice. And when a heathen judge, used to cruelty and bloodshed, asked in bewildered amazement: "Why? what evil hath he done?" and five several times declared; "I find no fault in him," even washing his hands of all participation; the cry rose fiercer and more terrible against him than before. The nation spoke; and for twenty centuries has not relented. Never was tyrant or felon so rejected; never monster so cast out.

Hell gnashed its demon teeth; and we hear, as it were, the clash of its hungry jaws; for we must remember that this was a contest between the seed of the woman and the

old serpent, whose head was to be crushed. The Jewish people lent themselves as a party to the fight. Wrong prevailed for a time, and evil triumphed for a season. The creation of intelligent beings, angels and men, turned on the condition of the incarnation of the second person of the Trinity; and the stability of the government of God depended on the issue of this contest; as well as the salvation of men; interests vast as eternity, important as the throne of God.

Calvary was the Thermopylæ of the universe, where the powers of evil were defeated and overthrown not for this world only. The spiritual forces engaged were the mightiest in existence; the results the farthest reaching; the question at issue fundamental to the government of God, and his spiritual kingdom. This globe small as it is, is the place of decision for the most momentous questions. God is educating angels by what takes place here; and raising up teachers from among men, who are to become ministering spirits to races yet to be created.

The enormous evil of sin, and its incredible opposition to God are to be learned from the history of men here; while its terrible results will be unfolded in the world of despair, to remain a beacon of warning and example through ceaseless ages. The redeemed from this world are being prepared for the loftiest work, that can be assigned to creatures; to be leaders to new born orders of spirits; to stand as objects of wondering regard; as those who can declare the love of God as none others can; and strike the notes of a song which none others can learn; but whose melody will entrance listening worlds; and to which God will bow his ear in rapture.

We are to remember, that while this rejection was the act of the Jews; it is also in a sense the act of the race; inasmuch as every human heart responds to it with a similar turning away and renunciation of Jesus, continued and repeated with more or less emotion of the very same character, as that which animated his enemies in that distant day. "As face answereth to face in the water," so the experience of our day repeats the rejection of two thousand years ago. We are guilty alike; and "there is no difference" in the sight of God.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

JUDAS ISCARIOT.

The men whom our Lord selected as his intimate and constant companions, were men of marked individuality, and exceedingly diverse personal characteristics. All varieties of temperament seem to have been represented, from the quick and impetuous, to the slow, cold and dogged. There were among them men of feeling, and men of judgment; men of the true philosophical mind, and men of action. At the first notice, all are surprised at the choice of Judas, and still more so at his reception of the position. The question, "Will ye also go away?" shows that one and all were at liberty to leave at their pleasure.

This selection was the highest possible honor; as it conferred the privilege of beholding all the miracles, and hearing all the instructions, public and private, and inspecting the unveiled personality of the mysterious being, whose career was opening. As Jesus himself said: "Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear; for verily I say unto you that many prophets and kings have desired to see the things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear the things which ye hear, and have not heard them." One hour's personal presence with Christ is worth more than an ordinary life-time. From the scant glimpses of the man Judas which are left us, it is possible to gain some insight into his inner life, and interpret the conduct which has made his name a synonym for treachery.

Those of the twelve who had previously been disciples of the Baptist, had been indoctrinated into a spiritual religion wholly unlike the prevalent Jewish formalism. John had inculcated not an external reformation; but an inward repentance, which as the word signifies, should be also a change of heart. For this very reason our Lord chose his apostles

from the adherents of John, whose ministry was an attempt at the restoration of primitive Judaism, requiring that spiritual service of Jehovah which the Old Testament makes so prominently requisite. His hearers were directed to a coming deliverer from sin, rather than to a national liberator. His one aim was to make ready a people prepared to greet and receive a Savior from sin. Jesus was not proclaimed by him as the lion of the tribe of Judah, destroying the nation's enemies; but as the lamb, whom God should provide to bear the sins of the world. It was this testimony of John which attracted to Jesus Andrew and Simon and James and John, the leading ones of the conclave of apostles. Many others of the followers of the Baptist were ready to hail the advent of such a deliverer; and such were transferred to the ranks of the Nazarene as quickly and effectively as possible. However mixed may have been their motives, and unauthorized their expectations, they had a genuine uppermost desire for salvation from the power of evil.

A man of a wholly mercenary spirit, as Judas revealed himself to be, would not be quickly attracted to such a teacher; however much his soul may have been thrilled by the announcement of the coming kingdom. Adventurers always turn up when things are rushing to a crisis, and a new order is universally expected. He hailed the appearance of Jesus of Nazareth, accredited as he was, as the signal of the speedy enfranchisement of Israel, and regarded him as the Lord's anointed to accomplish this desired event. The scriptures literally interpreted authorized the expectation of a king to sit on David's throne. Is. ix: 7: "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, on the throne of David and his kingdom; to order it and to establish it with justice and with judgment from henceforth even forever." Jer. 33: 17. "And David shall not want a man to sit upon his throne forever." Jer. also: "And David, my servant, shall be king over them." The angel said to Mary: "The Lord shall give unto him the throne of his father David." And the revelation to Zacharias included the same thing. How a Jew would read these scriptures a Gentile can hardly imagine:

how his soul would bound at the idea of the throne of David restored, and filled by his greater son and successor. The imagination of Judas was doubtless inflamed by such prospects.

In the pairing of the twelve into couples sent out together, Judas is always associated with Simon the Canaanite, or Zelotes, which words, the one Hebrew, the other Greek, describe him as one of the subsequent party of fanatical patriots. This pairing was evidently spontaneous, and decided by the affinities and preferences of the parties. The two undoubtedly sympathized in their views of the Master they followed, and the expected results of his ministry. Both possessed alike the unlimited confidence of their fellows, who themselves were animated by the same hopes and expectations to a degree.

Peter himself was not a more conspicuous figure among the twelve than was Judas, who became the business man of the company; to whom was entrusted the purse and the management of the necessary purveying and provision. Such a character is a desideratum in any club or association. The management of outlays and the adjustment of secular matters, and the custody of the common funds, fell naturally into his hands: indeed he became the factotum. This very appointment shows the character of the man. He had the business talent, and occupied himself with the unavoidable secularities of so considerable a company. He needed business to engage his attention; as he was not continually listening to the discourses, which others prized so highly.

As we read we are struck with the fact, that nothing is related which shows that he was interested in Jesus as a teacher at all. He is never heard asking an explanation, or seeking light upon any matter of faith or practice. His difficulties are never propounded, nor is his voice ever heard seeking instruction. Indeed from the way in which his name is mentioned in John xiv: 22: "One of his disciples, Judas not Iscariot, saith," it is to be inferred that Iscariot never opened himself by any question, or made a revelation of himself or of his difficulties. Peter and James and John were the intimate companions of their Master, sur-

rounding him in his walks and in his repose: the inner planets revolving around the central luminary at the closest distance. Judas, instead of sitting at his feet like Mary, to hear his word, was ever bustling and busy with the many things connected with the cares of this life. He was no student intent on catching every lesson of instruction: other thoughts occupied him: the vision of a kingdom was ever before him. He did not appreciate the teaching and the wisdom as he did the reserve power, which he knew his Master possessed.

It is easy to imagine, that in the contests about who should be the greatest, he was one of the most active participants, the rival of Peter; and expected to glide naturally into the administration of affairs as chief secretary. That this representation of him is not wholly conjectural, can easily be inferred from what happened at the feeding of the five thousand in the vicinity of Bethsaida. The multitude then present were determined to take Jesus by force, and make him king: nor was this purpose confined to them: the movement had the dimensions of a national one; and was maturing in countless minds. On the present occasion, it was impossible to dismiss and disperse the multitude; until our Lord had previously sent away his disciples. This fact shows that they were leaders in the attempt. We are told that "he constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side." He had to compel them to leave. All the disciples believed in the temporal kingdom, and were disposed to assist in carrying out any such scheme; so that it was absolutely necessary to be rid of them first, before he could succeed in breaking up the crowd, who, as the last of them departed, noticed that Jesus was left alone; no boat remaining, by which he could reach the other side.

This attempt shows how needful to the mission of Jesus it was, that he should not perform any miracle, which would suggest his ability to deliver the people from the tyranny of Rome. The tinder is not more sensitive to the flying spark; than was the restless Jewish mind to anything calculated to encourage the hope of national emancipation.

There were those present on this occasion, who were taking the gauge of Jesus as "the leader and commander of the people," and estimating his worth as a captain. Judas was evidently among the foremost in proposing and carrying out the exaltation of his Master; and the loudest in objecting to being sent away to the other side. The intention was by no means abandoned however; for on the next day the principal men of the previous day, came to Capernaum seeking for Jesus; and accosted him with the question: "Rabbi, when camest thou hither?" Sooner or later they must have heard of his night walk over the boisterous deep: there is but one who "treadeth upon the waves of the sea."

They were still persisting in their design to make him king; but he knew how to "rule the raging of the sea and the tumult of the people." The vi. ch. of John, which is a specimen of his teaching for a time, was inexpressibly offensive to them, and led to loud murmurs, Judas being the chief complainant. The doctrine of the divine sovereignty should humble men in the most urgent prayer for his favor; rather than incite to bitter complaints against him, "who rendereth not account of any of his matters." Such murmurers were embittered by the failure to compel the Master to accept the royalty. The loud dissatisfaction of Judas reached to such lengths, that the most fearful rebuke that ever fell from the lips of incarnate love, a blow from the sharp two-edged sword proceeding out of his mouth, smote him: "have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?"

This refusal of the crown was the pivotal point, on which turned the rejection of the Nazarene by the Jewish nation. It was an open proclamation that it was not in his intention to deliver Israel from the yoke of oppression; that this was no part of the work, which he was sent into the world to accomplish. His action in this matter cast the greatest damper upon his followers, and caused the large majority of the people to abandon him at once and forever. It had been burned into their souls by a keen sense of long continued suffering and the examples of deliverance in their past history; that the Messiah, when he

appeared, should espouse the cause of the oppressed nation, and most signally accomplish its liberation from heathen masters; and for a possible Messiah to hesitate, and decline this work stamped him as an impostor and a fraud. One thing they overlooked in the history of the past deliverances, their fathers had always been brought to a broken-hearted repentance for their sins before God vouchsafed the longed-for deliverance. The arm of the foe bore more and more heavily; until this result was secured. Salvation never preceded but always followed a national repentance. At this period the nation would listen to nothing, but immediate and thorough liberation. Henceforth the multitudes "walked no more with him." At his appearance on the stage they had rushed in countless throngs to behold and hear; but they "turned away as it were their faces from him." Better had it been for Judas had he followed the universal example. All may have admitted the reality the miracles, and heard apathetically of the mighty works; but what they heard only increased their irritation, and embittered their hostility; as proving him to be possessed of the necessary power to deliver his people, but lacking the patriotism.

Simultaneously with this alienation of the people, the teachings of the master took on a different tone. His words had previously been simple as infancy, and pellucid as the light; now he began to veil himself in parables. Matthew, possessed of an eminently Jewish cast of mind, delighting in dark sayings which require an interpreter, has made the fullest report of them. The casual hearer was only confirmed in his rejection of the inoffensive teacher, as being a mere mystic. Judas remained henceforth a conscious hypocrite and false friend. His alliance was nearly severed; and we can conjecture his aim in remaining. One thing is evident: he was firmly convinced, that the Nazarene was as holy and unselfish in deeds, as he was unlimited in power. Having the best opportunities of knowing him, he understood that he was no schemer, or impostor, or self-seeker; but intent only on honoring God.

Judas remained; but he remained only in a state of chronic dissatisfaction.

John the Baptist was staggered at this very thing, that no advance was made toward national enfranchisement; and pondered in his heart; if Jesus was not a failure; and another real deliverer to be expected in the future. The mother and brethren of Jesus were losing faith in him; his operations were so secret, hardly raising a ripple of general excitement, until near the end. Judas, confident of the Master's ability, remained in order to force matters and precipitate them, if opportunity ever again offered. Henceforth he had a purpose.

No interview, that our Lord had while on earth, had a greater influence upon the sentiments and conduct of his disciples, than his conversation with the rich young ruler, whom he directed to sell all that he had, and give to the poor, and to come and follow him. This direction awakened unbounded astonishment in the minds of the twelve, with no little mixture of dismay. They were looking forward to the unlimited enjoyment of worldly good, and the possession of great riches in the coming kingdom; and such a requirement, as the selling of all earthly goods, and embracing a life of poverty, smote them with a perfectly bewildering amazement; and led Peter to ask with a choking voice: "Lo, we have left all and followed thee: what shall we have therefore?" as though nothing desirable remained, if the possession of riches were interdicted. When our Lord saw the blank amazement which appalled the whole company; his voice assumed the tenderest tone, and he addressed them by a name of endearment: "Children, how hard is it for them that have riches to enter into the kingdom of heaven." His statement was however of the most positive kind, and he spoke with unusual force. The disappointment could not have been greater: their hopes were dashed at a blow. How deep and crushing was the impression, the memorable Pentecost revealed. The centuries have listened; and sacrifices beyond numbering have been made in obedience to the expressed will, and the example of the heavenly Master.

We can imagine that no one felt the disappointment more keenly than he, whose lips were hermetically sealed against remonstrance. If the followers of Jesus were to

look for no reward in this life, but persecutions, and scourgings, and death; the prospect was not inviting to one who yet remained silent, however. This conversation with the young ruler was a revelation to all. Not only *he* went away sorrowful; but there remained a company of sorrowful ones behind. Jesus reassured them with promises of greater good; but his promises seemed indefinite to one who knew no greater good than the possession of riches. Instructions so unearthly had never been heard before; such a damper had never before been put upon all their expectations. Every word recorded itself upon the tablet of memory with a pen of iron. The Master had at length spoken out without reserve; and every word like a heavy blow crushed them beneath its stroke.

Who can but be moved with pity as he contemplates this disconsolate soul? Judas saw the dark side of the Christian life; but its brightness was entirely concealed from him; he saw the cross with all its self-denial; but did not see the crown. He realized what was contained in the loss of all things; but knew nothing of the inward supports, the joy unspeakable and full of glory, and the hundred fold more in this life. The path was to him a way of privation and contempt, with no indwelling comforter to extract joy out of sorrow, and gild the dark clouds with a lining of glory. His cup had all the bitterness, and none of the sweets, none of the consolations of God, which are neither few nor small.

How little he knew of Christ, though in daily contact with him! He had heard the words of him, who spake as never man spake, and not appreciated the inconceivable love that uttered them; had never discerned the yearning pity, that rejoices in the repentance of a sinner more than over ninety and nine that went not astray; had no conception of that loving kindness, whose pulse throbs with ecstasy over the recovery of a lost soul, and the restoration of one that had been mourned as dead. In one word, he had never gained a distant view of the self-sacrificing love of him he followed. He had seen the miracles; recognized the divinity; but never seen the Savior. He had heard the voice; but his soul had never discerned the music

of the celestial love, that gave it its enrapturing melody. The being, who is the love-wonder of the skies, had moved before him; but having eyes, he had not seen; having ears, he had not heard.

The day of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem at length arrived. Centuries before, the prophet had in vision seen the unbroken and unbridled colt bearing the meek and lowly King, with its mother following; and passing untrifled amid shouting thousands, and over outspread garments and branches of trees, contrary to its instincts, but steady in its course. After the dreadful end, the disciples remembered how perfectly they had unconsciously fulfilled the prediction to the letter. Olivet never beheld a grander parade in state. Jesus on that memorable day accepted the title "Son of David;" and the multitude made the heaven ring with it. The disciples were carried away with the enthusiasm of the people, which not unreasonably reached the highest pitch, encouraged by the assent of the leader himself. The hopes of Judas revived; none shouted louder than he, or did more to inflame the zeal of the crowd. The Master, formerly unwilling, now is consenting to the kingdom. But in the midst of all this honor and acclaim, the simple sight of the city caused Jesus to burst into tears, and to weep loudly and bitterly; and the words that issued from his tear-wet lips were words of doom, devoting the holy city to destruction. For such words of denunciation uttered in invective, any other man would have paid with his life on the spot. They were heard with a pang.

When our Lord entered the city, its whole population down to the children were in the streets, and on the roofs of the houses. He came down upon his enemies like an avalanche; wrested the holy house from their jurisdiction, establishing himself in it, and sustaining his claim unanswerably in every colloquy; passed judgment of condemnation on all the sects of Judaism, being Lord of the temple and Master of the situation; sitting superior to every attack; so that "no man any more durst ask him any question." After every mouth had been stopped, he pressed his own claims to the Messiahship triumphantly; and sat

in judgment on the rulers, denouncing them in the strongest words ever uttered. He was an adversary not to be encountered openly in honest contest. When Judas marked the livid countenances of the rulers, in which rage and fear were equally visible, noted their intense malignity, and the cruel determination of their look; and remembered how the Nazarene abjured all self-defence; he formed his own conclusions as to which party was likely to prevail.

It is not probable that the terrible purpose to betray his Lord was formed by the traitor; until he had been publicly reproved again at the table of Simon in Bethany; where he had been lamenting the waste of money by the use of the highest priced ointment in the market. Money was the centre, around which his soul revolved. He had even gained the concurrence of some of the twelve in his complaints; but when the Master approved the act, and received the gift as the burial service of an undying love, like the flowers with which affection adorns the coffin; his words were so tender and so solemn, containing the highest encomium his lips ever uttered; that the old wound received at Capernaum was torn open and bled afresh. Reproof repeated becomes intolerable: and often exasperating. Judas at once put himself in communication with the enemies; and when soon afterwards, Jesus gave him to understand that he knew all that was passing; and even designated him to Peter and John, we are told that "Satan entered into him:" *i. e.* his anger became unbounded; and an awful hardness of heart, and reckless disregard of consequences, overmastered him.

He hastened to the hall of the high priest, where the rulers were in session; and had just voted to take no steps against the Nazarene, until after the feast; when Judas rushed into their assembly in the greatest trepidation and haste with the question: "what will ye give me; and I will betray him unto you?" They saw that he was so angered and determined; that he could be induced for a small sum to gratify his own private revenge, and they agreed with him for thirty shekels: "a goodly price that I was prized at of them." Judas did not set the price; he took whatever they offered.

The plans of the rulers were immediately changed to suit the new situation, and act before another failure could occur. Crime always moves in hot haste, without time for thought. The traitor judged correctly as to the conflict between men without principle or conscience, and unresisting innocence, as men of the world judge. He was not going to be on the losing side all the time. It can hardly be concluded that he betrayed his Lord for money. He was a man who would do nothing without a money consideration; but the priests took advantage of his state of mind; or he could have secured a much better bargain. It was done out of revenge for the great disappointment of his life, and the terrible rebukes which were as a sword in his bones.

The fated thirty pieces burned his flesh like fire; and when he cast them away in the temple, his employers would not touch them to gather them up; and they durst not deposit them in the chest devoted to contributions; the potter with his own fingers had to pick them from the marble floor. The traitor became the most effective witness of the twelve to the immaculate sinlessness, and absolute divinity of his Master. The truth, like the sun, burst through the clouds of passion and of sin that had darkened his soul. It is astonishing how a great sin opens the eyes to forgotten truths and facts. In his despair it did not comfort him that the enemies were on the winning side, and had prevailed. He saw his Master condemned: the lamb in the jaws of the ravening wolves. Never was a dying testimony more sincere. Not Peter, in all his ministry, nor John, in his long life, bore louder testimony. He bequeathed his name to the bit of ground, the scene of his death. The humble prophet of Nazareth had no stronger attestation than the unquenchable fires of remorse, and the gnawing worm of torment of which the traitor was the subject.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE ARREST AND EXAMINATION BEFORE CAIAPHAS.

That the arrest of the prophet of Nazareth was understood to be a nice and delicate affair is discernible from the presence of the senior officer of the Roman garrison, corresponding to a colonel in modern army service, with the party sent to apprehend him. This leader was a man of experience in cases of danger, and possessed unlimited discretion in the matter confided to him. The guards assigned to the task were a squad of temple police with their batons or clubs, staves as they are called; and a detail of Roman soldiers armed with the short swords which were for use in hand to hand encounters; besides a company of attendants with lanterns and torches, with which the thickest recesses of the olive orchard, where he was to be found, could be explored. The design evidently was to make a seizure of the whole company of disciples and teacher.

Arriving at the gate of the enclosure designated by the traitor, as the haunt of him they sought; they were met at the entrance by the figure of a man who demanded of them: "Whom seek ye?" at this unseasonable hour and in this sequestered place? and when they answered, Jesus of Nazareth, he replied: "I am he." The light of the moon showed him almost as distinctly as the light of day could have done. Never was his countenance more radiant with submission and more expressive of the love whose flood-tide was even then overtopping the highest mountains of human sin; and his very voice had a tone of more than mortal tenderness. The surprise of the sudden encounter and the indescribable boldness of the intended victim sent a shock to the hearts of the posse; and a sudden conviction flashed upon them of the infamy of their errand,

as leading an attack upon immaculate innocence, and lending themselves as tools in the hands of groundless malice. A brief paralysis subdued their strength, and sank their hearts in dismay. They staggered backward, and fell to the ground.

The one first to recover was Judas: and the whole scheme of arrest might have failed; had he not pressed forward, and seized the Master, and kissed him. No more striking exhibition of submission could be afforded by the sinless victim, than the giving of his lips to the kiss of the traitor. It was like giving his soul to the temptation of Satan. "Whom seek ye?" the voice again demanded. "I have told you, that I am he. If ye seek me, let these go their way." He thus surrendered, stipulating his own conditions, which were, that his disciples might pass away unmolested.

Under the spell of his individuality, it was impossible to do otherwise than as he asked; and the officer, in whom was the discretion, could but agree. Even in this hour of weakness, he was the superior party. When, however, the familiars of the high priest, who were the proper ones to make the arrest, approached and laid their hands upon Jesus to seize and bind him, the sword of Peter smote the foremost, and, his head being probably protected by some stout covering, cut off his right ear. The touch of the Master replaced the ear, and healed the wound, saving his enemies from the least damage in the seizure of his person; causing them to realize for a moment, that themselves were in his power; rather than he in theirs. No soldier, nor sword nor torch was needed for the arrest; the lamb was ready for the sacrifice. So glaring an outrage could not be allowed to pass without a protest; and it was made when the prisoner asked: "are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me." That they should pursue him by night in his solitude like a hiding criminal, when opportunities abounded daily of open proceedings, betrayed the character of the measures taken against him. The disciples waited in con-

sternation until they saw him bound, and led away in the power of the enemies; and then they all forsook him and fled unpursued.

A large company had followed the police and soldiers, among whom were chief priests, elders of the Sanhedrin and others; interest and curiosity had gathered a crowd who sympathized with the Jewish leaders; a single friend of the Nazarene, just fresh from his pillow, was pursued by the officials, and narrowly escaped capture. To the assembled multitude our Lord then said: "This is your hour, and the power of darkness." Night and darkness befit such proceedings; and these actors are in open league with the great prince of evil; though unaware of the fact.

The prisoner was led to the house of Annas the patriarch of the priestly connection, who sent him to Caiaphas the legal high priest, before whom the examination related by the evangelists was had. In considering the accounts it is impossible not to be amazed at the extreme haste of the whole procedure. Never was process rushed through with such indecent hurry. The arrest occurred not far from midnight; and execution followed at nine of the following morning; and this after passing through three several courts, and before three several judges. Nothing like it can be found in the history of civilized administration; except under martial law; when the sword dispenses summary justice on the spot. Their own time-honored forms were violated at every step of the affair. This nervous haste accompanies ever the commission of crime; once determined on, a certain fever of the soul forbids delay. The criminal shuts his eyes, and plunges headlong with accelerated pulse. Nothing can be more irksome to him than reflection; and it is forcefully hushed. In the consummation of the death of Christ there was fearful haste. "He was taken without prison, and without judgment." Is. 53: 8. The high day of the feast was just upon them; but the least delay could not be permitted. The actors in this tragedy were deaf to argument, blind to results; driven by the fiercest impulses; and, as the end showed, nothing could have deterred them from their determined course;

they were hurried by the breath of a blast from the pit to the completion of their purpose. Behind them was the arch fiend.

The high priest, the presiding officer of the council, was openly and professedly hostile to the prisoner; once in his life he had prophesied, for occasional inspiration belonged to his office; and he had the presumption to interpret and understand his prophecy according to his own passions; instead of humbly inquiring what manner of time the spirit signified. Fortified thus by insuperable conviction, he presided only to secure the condemnation of the one arraigned at his bar. Hence all the rulings of the court were against the prisoner, and against right and justice as well.

From being judge he voluntarily assumed the role of prosecutor. He permitted the innocent to be wantonly smitten on the mouth, for the only answer proper to his inquisitorial question. This blow revealed the surprising fact, carefully noted; that the dreaded miracle worker could be smitten with impunity. The judge administered no rebuke to the over officious attendant, who was employed to preserve suitable order in the assembly; not to administer punishment to the uncondemned. He labored to the dawning of the day to find false witness against the sinless one, carefully abstaining from insisting on the criminality of perjury, and the sacredness of human life, as the rules required. The assurance of impunity encouraged the production of evidence. Every oath taken in that hall on that fatal night was a perjury; and this the high priest made no effort to prevent.

He so far forgot the responsibilities of his high position, as to fall into a towering passion against the prisoner; because baffled in every attempt to secure legal testimony against him. It sounds in his words of adjuration, and appears in his unseemly violence in rending the robe that covered his anointed bosom, being betrayed into ungovernable anger at the invulnerability of innocence. And then he suffered that horrid scene of abuse made up of taunts and blows and spitting; for he permitted it in open court, and perhaps set the example himself, against a victim yet uncondemned; for the whole power of condemnation in

capital cases was vested in the Roman governor. The mockery was premature; as Pilate, had he obeyed his own convictions, would never have consented, without the threatening of an impending insurrection. The really dangerous Barrabas could be released without a resulting tumult; Jesus of Nazareth, never. It had been instinctively felt that his person was inviolable: the judge and senators had learned the contrary; and when the opportunity offered, they manifested their unutterable scorn and their still surpassing hatred of him whom they had reason to know to be God's "righteous servant."

Such was the judge; and as for the testimony, it was all false; as the witnesses examined separately, without the possibility of collusion, did not any two of them, which was the smallest number allowed in capital cases, agree in their testimony. The closest approach to harmony was made by two, probably members of the council, and themselves judges, one of them witnessing. This fellow said: "I am able to destroy this temple, and to build it in three days;" Matt. 26: 61; and the other: "*I* will destroy this temple, that is made with hands; and within three days I will build another made without hands." Mk. 14: 58.

To repeat a man's words verbatim requires a nice hearing, and an exact memory; as the slightest variation of a single word may change the sense entirely. So in this case Jesus had not said, "I will destroy this temple," but do "*you* destroy this temple;" and this change of one smallest word would remove all shadow of a possible charge against him on this ground.

Again, the accompanying gesture was as necessary to be repeated as the words. He did not in speaking wave his hand toward the lofty pile of glittering marble, as the temple to which he referred; but probably folded his arms across his own breast, thereby indicating the only real temple in existence. The Shechinah had never been present in the second house; but did tabernacle in his own body. These witnesses, thus guilty of perjury and of intended murder in attempting to swear away an innocent life, met with no punishment nor even reproof from the representative of Hebrew justice.

But supposing that their testimony had agreed; and that the prisoner had said what was reported; words only were proved thereby, and no overt act of contempt. Had the whole history of the temple cleansing been fairly given; the high priest would have been proved the real desecrator of the holy house, and Jesus of Nazareth its vindicator. So the lamb, standing farther down the stream, had fouled the water where the wolf was drinking above him, and must pay the penalty with his life. Hatred, sitting in the seat of power, is never at a loss for reasons, and never conscious of the most glaring inconsistencies and aberrations from truth and justice.

In this trial, the actors were violating all the self-imposed rules of their court. No rules could be more fair or just, and even kind, than the standing directions for the government of the Jewish Sanhedrin, as they had been established by long usage. Some of them are as follows: The office of the Sanhedrin is to save life, not to destroy it; its object is to stand between a man arraigned, and the fury of the populace; and to shield the victim from the prejudice and injustice of the multitude; no one is to be made to incriminate himself; the accused is always to be allowed counsel, and to call witnesses; witnesses are to be reminded of their responsibilities, and of the sacredness of human life; perjury is a heinous offence against God and man; and one guilty thereof is to be held liable to the same punishment which his testimony, if true, would have brought upon the accused; capital trials cannot be held on Friday; no trial can be carried through in the night; a majority of two is required in order to condemn; a day of fasting must intervene after trial, before an accused man is pronounced guilty; and sentence must never be executed on the day of the trial; no one having spoken in favor of acquittal, can afterwards vote to condemn.

Such were some of their established rules of procedure; and it must be confessed that better, as securing the welfare and safety of the citizen, were never adopted or enforced in any land. The spirit of the whole code inclines to leniency and moderation; and agrees well with the manifest precepts of their religion. In the present case, however, no

favor was shown to the prisoner, who, as he had been silent to the slanders of the world, and the accusations of his enemies, now yielded himself unresistingly to their treatment: no tongue remonstrating, when every custom of their court, and every rule of right, was openly, repeatedly, and continually violated.

The nation had turned with bloody vengeance on every reprover; and now with tenfold fury were assailing the sinless one. The children of those who had killed the prophets, were preparing to fill the measure of their fathers; and make the earth quake with astonishment, and the sun to put on robes of mourning.

The silence of the accused produced a most marked effect. It was not the silence of haughtiness, nor of sullenness, nor of stoical indifference; it was a most expressive condemnation of the whole course of proceedings. He would take no part whatever in a trial begun in causeless malice, carried out in shameless injustice, and whose issue was settled beyond possibility of change, before process was commenced. Men, who would disbelieve the testimony of the soldiers still trembling from the presence of the angel of the resurrection, and bribe them to a lie in the face of such divine demonstration, were not to be turned from their purpose by the words of a prisoner in their power. They were beyond the reach of argument or appeal; and had passed beyond the control of reason and truth.

Here was a prisoner, who opened not his mouth to defend himself (such a spectacle was never seen before or since), or to lower the sublime dignity of his position by deferring one word to the jurisdiction of a court, in which hatred and envy sat on the bench, and filled the stalls of the voters. This was the course for him to pursue, who knew what was in man, to whom all the hearts of the actors were naked and open. He gave himself to their judgment and their insults; as he gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them who plucked off the hair.

The effect of this passion was visible in the action of the high priest, who with violence in his gestures and anger in his tone, disappointed in not procuring evidence that could be entertained by the council, may have said. I know how

to make you speak, and incriminate yourself. "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the son of the blessed." In this trial no charge had been made of his deceiving the people by false or pretended miracles. These men had investigated, and were well aware that his mighty works could neither be denied, nor impugned. No charge was made of false doctrine, or of teachings inconsistent with the revealed word of God. They were constrained to admit: "thou teachest the way of God truly" in the very doctrines of the Jewish scriptures.

The stone of stumbling and rock of offence was his personality. Yet in all the predictions, of the Messiah, no one thing appertaining to him was more strongly emphasized than his full divinity. Although Jesus had never publicly and distinctly avowed his Messiahship nor his dignity: but had only done so in private and to individuals; and had left all to be inferred from his works and instructions; yet Caiaphas as well as the whole nation were well aware of his claims. The tone of divinity sounded in all his teachings: the manner of God discovered itself in all his miracles: His presence had in it the authority of unblemished holiness, and purity incapable of stain. "He could not be hid."

Thus called upon not for defence but with regard to his sublime individuality, our Lord, responsive to the oath imposed, hesitated not to answer with a boldness, that shocked the questioner, and an imperial elevation of manner, that showed all that heard, that he felt the high consciousness of being all he claimed: "thou hast said it: I am. Nevertheless *i. e.* (notwithstanding the scorn with which I am regarded) hereafter shall ye see the son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Words never had greater force than these: the declaration convulsed the assembly; destroyed its decorum entirely; and changed its aspect from that of a court of justice to a mob of howling canaille. The high priest rent his robe, and cried blasphemy: all sprang to their feet and demanded in chorus, each for himself: "art

thou then the son of God?" and when he replied: "ye say that which I am," joined in the shout of blasphemy; and condemned him to death.

The words of Jesus possessed a force never attending the utterance of a mere man. They were felt more deeply and remembered longer. They seem often to have rankled in the memory of hearers. Once heard they were never forgotten; as the speaker once seen never vanished from the view; but haunted the memory of beholders. The picture never faded, or lost its vivid reality. As he himself was *sui generis*, so was every word from his lips, every expression of his countenance; and everything he did partook of the mystery which invested himself. It is therefore impossible to form an adequate conception of him: art has labored in vain to delineate him: no conception of him has ever been attained, which satisfies the demands of the soul.

But mere condemnation did not satisfy the deep dislike of these councillors. They abandoned the order of a solemn assembly; and surrounded him to "spit upon him, to buffet him, and to smite him with the palms of their hands," having discovered that it was safe to vent their insults upon him. It is difficult to imagine a greater insult than for a man to stand and spit, and spit leisurely, to hawk the filthy mucus from the depths of an unclean throat, and eject it into the eyes and upon the cheeks and lips of a hated opponent. Perhaps the like has never been done in any other case. As an expression of unutterable contempt, it remains, and ever will remain unparalleled and alone. If this had been the deed of low, half civilized ruffians, it might pass as expressing the barbarism of the actors. But for calm and sober jurists, many of them aged, to condescend to abuse of this kind, shows them to have been transported with an enmity which defies explanation, which for a time transformed them, and as yet he was uncondemned.

The desire of the tormentors was to subdue the spirit of the holy sufferer, to cower him, and abate the lofty elevation of his demeanor. For this they persisted in inflicting

upon him the foulest disgrace that could be contrived, united with as much physical suffering as possible. His bold and overwhelming profession of his Messiahship and relation to the eternal Father must have convinced them of the utter futility of their efforts; nor could they by all possible indignities bring the slightest tinge of shame upon that holy cheek. Of shame he was not susceptible: easier a thousand fold were it for a worm to stain the sun with shame, or dwarf its glory; than for Jewish enemies to cast down the countenance of the Holy One, or change his inward consciousness of oneness with God, or produce the slightest wavering of his purpose. His infinite superiority was only made more manifest by the attempt.

Very early in the morning of the following day an orderly meeting of the Sanhedrin was held, a night session being forbidden by their rules. A full understanding and agreement had been reached, however, during the night conference, of the steps to be taken in carrying out their design; so that a meeting of a few minutes' duration was all that was needed. The prisoner was at once judged worthy of death, and it was determined to deliver him to the Roman power, as being guilty of treason against Rome, by claiming to be a king himself. His execution was demanded on that very day, though such an appointment of the day was expressly forbidden by their own regulations.

The least promising body of men, in a religious sense, as men, in any state or kingdom, often is the legislative body. Their presence in a city is often realized to be no advantage to the inhabitants. The members of the Jewish Senate were many of them advanced in age, inveterate in their opinions and prejudices, rich, and, as a body adept in state-craft, men of policy, corrupt in principle, and wholly worldly in all their character. Such were the men, who condemned the Nazarene; but they expressed in this act the deliberate will of the people. The nation was present in force at this passover, impressed with the sense that a great crisis was at hand; and that the occasion was big with mighty destinies. Their voice decided against their

Messiah, when they said, after Pilate had washed his hands of the blood of this just man: "His blood be on us and on our children." The mockery, the spitting, the cruel blows were the acts of their high priest and senators, some of whom still, in the depths of their souls, believed that he could not be other than he professed to be. Jno. 12: 42. The rejection was the deliberate act of the nation.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE TRIAL BEFORE PILATE.

It is difficult to understand how the Jewish people should so wonderfully err about their long expected Messiah; as the time of his coming was so definitely fixed by prophecy. The four hundred and ninety years of Daniel were expiring; the sceptre was departing from Judah; and a Gentile power was laying a direct tax, and collecting it by its own officers. The imposition of the Roman census was the cause of Joseph's journey to Bethlehem, at the period most inconvenient to his espoused wife; and the birth of Jesus is thus exactly coincident with the measure, which wrested the sceptre from the hand of Judah. Simeon and Anna knew, from sources open to the whole nation, the near approach of the Messiah's appearance so definitely, as to make it a subject of special prayer, to be permitted to behold him with their own eyes.

He was to be like Moses, who renounced a throne, and despised the glory of the world; and who, though rejected by his people, yet became their conductor through the wilderness to the borders of the land of promise: like Moses remarkable not for pride and pomp, but meekness; interceding for an ungrateful nation, continually murmuring, and at times almost ready to stone him. The pious and disinterested compassion of Moses for a guilty people, especially the sublime exercise of it, to which he rose on Mount Sinai, was a transient picture of the unchanging sympathy of the man of sorrows for an unworthy race.

What goes far toward rendering it almost impossible to mistake him as they did, was the preparatory ministry of the Baptist. If *he* had been rejected by them, and his testimony disbelieved, the rejection of Jesus would not have been so unaccountable. But John was received as a true

prophet by all except an insignificant fraction of Pharisees; though he wrought no miracle. His ministry not only awakened the attention of the entire people; but won their confidence, and fixed their wavering belief. The expectation of the immediate coming of the Messiah became certainty. John designated the very person: and disappeared: his career was terminated.

But the Nazarene, after protracted and sufficient acquaintance, was deliberately with the utmost decision rejected. It was not the act of a few tumultuous spirits. The nation was assembled in unwonted number at the greatest of their feasts. It was the act not of the priests only: it had the assent of the multitude: not a voice rose in opposition. It was also a hasty act: the course once determined was carried through without faltering, and with unseemly haste. The exercise of reason was for the time suspended. In this transaction there was hot haste, uncontrollable eumity was urging; and sympathy and consideration were stifled. There was joy at the unexpected opportunity of destroying a hated pretender; fear lest he might yet, in some unforeseen manner, escape; anxiety to improve at once the feeling of the people, before there was time for reaction; and uncertainty as to their own success, until he was put beyond the possibility of annoying them farther. The pulse beat hard and heavy enough to almost burst the aching arteries in which it throbbed. There was not time for a capital execution without infringing on the holy day, the high day of the feast. Malefactors if hung upon the cross must yet be murdered; not having time to die the death.

The condemnation of Jesus by their council was without color of law. A whole night had been spent in a fruitless endeavor to devise a legal method of destroying him; and failing utterly in this, they had proceeded without a formulated charge, and without a legal witness. There were many witnesses; but false, because the testimony of no two agreed.

And they prevailed with Pilate *only* by violence and clamor. The prisoner would have been released; if it could have been effected without a tumult. It was only on this

conviction, that Pilate yielded. He had on other occasions been forced to succumb to their dictation; he had never seen them so fierce and determined before. Barabbas, with hands stained with blood, could be released without the displeasure of the populace or the priests; Jesus of Nazareth could not be liberated without tumult. Not one scrap of evidence was produced on the trial; and where was there a calm consideration and adjudgment of the case? Nothing of the kind appears, but a violence that forced the judge to act contrary to the most painfully solemn convictions of his life. How dire the hatred that had been conceived in the short term of a three year's ministry!

The trial was not even conducted in the court room. It was not only a mockery of right and justice; but on account of the accusers, being unable to enter the hall of a Gentile during the passover solemnities without defilement, it was conducted in the open air, in the presence of a mob; and had not even the show of a high criminal court, among a civilized, not to say a religious people. Every step of this passionate procedure merits attention.

I. Pilate endeavored first to escape the necessity of sitting upon this case at all. Perhaps he had no knowledge of what was progressing, until he was early awakened not long after the dawn of day, by the noise of a gathered crowd. Going out at the call of the Jewish rulers, he beheld a large and excited assembly, headed by the priests and elders, and in the midst the high priest accompanied by a prisoner bound to be delivered into the hands of the governor.

As soon as he learned who the prisoner was, his proposal to the leaders shows the surprise of the moment. He well knew what was intended by an application to himself. Without taking time to reflect, he said: "take ye him, and judge him according to your law." It was like saying, I am never applied to except in capital cases when life is to be forfeited; but in this case I return the prisoner to you; do with him as you may please; I do not wish to act in these premises. If he is put to death even, the Roman power shall neither interfere nor object. In any other case, had these men proceeded to lengths without regard to him, he

would have speedily reminded them of the limits of their authority. But astonished at the apprehension of the Nazarene prophet, he unthinkingly expressed his unwillingness to have any part in his condemnation. The answer of the high priest revealed the determination to which the leaders of the chosen nation had deliberately come, and devolved on the governor the hateful necessity of at least hearing the complaint. This step was directed by an overruling Providence to fulfill the words of the Savior predicting the manner of death he should die.

The whole matter had been previously concerted among the plotters; and they were determined not only that Jesus should die, but that he should die the death of the cross; because that was a death combining more of torture, ignominy and shame than any other. Stoning was too good for him. Besides, it was their plan that he should be judicially executed by the most solemn condemnation, and by the sanction of the governing power; that greater terror might shock all who were disposed to be his disciples.

When this extraordinary proposal of Pilate was declined, he had to listen to fierce and rapid accusations. But he heard as though he heard them not. His thoughts were occupied in devising some escape from this abhorred affair; and incidentally hearing and recognizing the word Galilee repeated in their invectives, he asked whether the man were a Galilean. And, understanding that he was, he eagerly grasped at the prospect of relief. Herod was himself in Jerusalem at this time, the liege prince of the prisoner. Pilate had shown him no civility, had not even recognized his presence. They were enemies; but such was his distress, that he sent the crowd and the prisoner to him as one of his subjects. He was greatly relieved by the opportunity of so doing, and flattered himself that he was at length free from the responsibility of the affair. But what said his conscience, when he had time for cool reflection? Had he done right in sending one whom he knew to be innocent to a Herod? Had he done right in his proposal to the priests to take him and do their pleasure with him? He could not certainly feel an approving conscience; but he was comforted in being clear of the case.

Herod could not have been more highly gratified than by this very thing. He interpreted Pilate's action as an intended civility; when it resulted entirely from distress; and was willing to give up his enmity, and be reconciled to the governor. The murderer of John the Baptist had been "desirous of a long time to see Jesus, who he was." He had said: "it is John, whom I beheaded. He is risen from the dead, therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him." He wished, his remorse spoke the wish, to see the features, and hear the voice of the Nazarene, and to ask many questions of him; not of what he must do to be saved; but questions of curiosity, answers to which might help to quiet his uneasy conscience. It could be told beforehand; that he would receive no answer. The Savior "answered him to never a word;" nor did he reply to the accusations of the priests and scribes, who "stood and vehemently accused him." He stood, as a lamb at the altar of sacrifice.

He was charged as being the Son of David, and King by right and of divine appointment. Herod, though goaded by the appeals of the accusers, yet shrank from enacting again the tragedy of blood. It cost too much in heartaches and internal wounds again to sacrifice an innocent man. He at first offered Jesus immediate release, on condition of his performing one miracle then and there. The fact that he did not comply convinced Herod, probably, that he had not the power, or that he would deliver himself miraculously. Piqued and mortified by the continued silence of his prisoner, the artful "fox" determined to abate forever all his aspirations to royalty by the most crushing ridicule; and to make a show of him openly, exposing him to the foulest derision. The plot was conceived in Herod's own brain: he was in jovial mood, and in the best of humor with himself, with Pilate, and with the Jews. By his order a cast off robe of royalty arrayed the would-be king and Herod himself and his men of war paid their homage on bended knee. He thus set the example, which the soldiers of Pilate carried out so brutally. Herod supposed that this would be a termination of all kingly pretensions, which could not survive such mockery, and likewise relieve him-

self from additional blood-guiltiness. It is enough to know that he did not dare to condemn him. While he was moved by the most cruel scorn, he was yet fearful of the mysterious being before him, whom he supposed to have some inexplicable connection with John, whom he had beheaded. In sending the accused back to Pilate, he was guilty of gross dereliction of duty, in abandoning one, whom as his prince, he was bound to protect.

Poor Pilate! He dreaded nothing more than to see the returning mob; but "he was determined to let him go." He had spoken but one word to his prisoner: had asked him: "art thou the King of the Jews?" their expected Messiah? and had received the answer: "thou sayest it" I am what thou sayest; but that one single word convinced him. He was ready to pronounce him innocent. While Jesus was silent under accusation, as he had been to the mocking Herod, he answered the governor, and his tone and aspect were enough to convince. Pilate was familiar with the appearance of guilt: he knew all its characteristics. This prisoner was silent, not from stubbornness for he answered honest inquiries; nor from fierce contempt; his countenance bore an expression of the most hallowed submission; nor from shame, the majesty of his look offended Pilate, and made him ask: "am I a Jew?" He answered with such dignity, as though himself the judge, and Pilate the criminal. He was like no other prisoner ever arraigned at the Roman bar. Usually a criminal was cowering with shame, flushed with anger against his accusers, and foward to vindicate himself beyond all decorum. How different the Nazarene! He wore a greater majesty, though oppressed with insult, than Cesar on the throne of the world. It was difficult to say which was most striking, the greatness or the submission of the sufferer. His eye had a tenderness in it sufficient by its look to break the heart of Peter till he wept like a child; to soften the crucified malefactor to genuine repentance. The rugged Roman felt his heart quail before him. The formalities of modern courts did not obtain in those days. The power of decision was vested in one man and he formed his judgment of guilt or innocence very much from the appearance and action of the parties; and

became a good judge and interpreter of blame-worthiness and guilt. It mattered not to him what was charged; he knew that Jesus was innocent. "He was determined to let him go." With such convictions he met the assembly; he faced the priests. He declared openly and decidedly: "I find no fault in him." But when he noted the vehemence of their accusations, and saw the deep malignity which actuated them, he next—

II. Made every possible effort to release him. Forced in spite of himself to try the case, he heard what was laid against him, and then proposed: "I find no fault in this man: I will therefore chastise him and let him go." Strange justice: "I find no fault in him; I will therefore chastise him." He yielded to do violence to his own convictions; that he might gratify in part the feelings of the people, in the hope that their sympathies might be touched in behalf of suffering innocence. A compromise with sin is not the means of withstanding it. But Roman scourging was very severe, the prototype of Russian knouting, and could easily be inflicted till a culprit fainted. At Pilate's command the scourge was applied to the delicate, quivering flesh. "The ploughers ploughed upon my back, and made long their furrows." It was grievous to the judge as well as to the sufferer; but it did not waken sympathy as Pilate had hoped. The mob was not so easily satisfied. It was impossible in this way to enlist them in his behalf. Their cries were of encouragement to the punishers. When this became apparent, the governor had recourse to another expedient.

He remembered the custom to release unto them a prisoner at this yearly feast. He took advantage of this custom in a most dexterous manner. His wits were sharpened by managing men in troublous times. He had in his dungeons several prisoners (of whom two were crucified with Jesus) of minor importance: but among them was one man notable for his crimes. He was an enemy to the Roman government: a traitor and a murderer. He was notorious as a criminal, dreaded by the people. Releasing him would be unchaining a tiger. Such a prisoner seldom falls into the hands of justice, without considerable effort and expense. He richly deserved from his fellow-men the

utmost rigor, and it was almost treasonable to ask his liberation. Instead of allowing the choice from all the criminals, he limited them to Barabbas and Jesus. Here he discovered great sagacity. It was a threat as it were: consent to the acquittal of the Nazarene, or I will let loose upon you the dreaded Barabbas.

His sagacity appears in another respect. It was an appeal from the priests, with whom the prosecution of Jesus lay, to the people. If this prisoner possesses the affections of the people, as is reported, if some of his friends are here, and voices are raised for his release, though in the minority, I will yet release him. How ingenious his resources in this extremity! He never for a moment supposed, but that he should succeed in this. The people, as he thought shut up to this alternative, will certainly some of them demand that right prevail. Oh! little didst thou know, O Pilate, the depth of that feeling, which moved the hearts of all that multitude as the heart of one man! Called upon to select, they answer with one voice: "not this man; but Barabbas." The cry arose first from the high priest and his fellows; but it was echoed by the people, and that most heartily. The voices are loud and eager; and there is no dissenting cry. Pilate could hardly believe his own ears, and to test their feelings, asked again: "What shall I then do with Jesus, who is called the Christ?" The answer came with energetic readiness: "Let him be crucified." What! do they ask that one of their own nation suffer the servile death of the cross! Pilate might have hesitated to inflict it upon a free Jew, for fear of exciting insurrection. They demand sentence to the cross against one of their own countrymen.

Seeing at once, that there was a hatred against the Nazarene, the nature of which he did not understand, and the strength of which he had altogether misapprehended, he again asked: "Why, what evil hath he done?" Let some offense be proved; substantiate some accusation; and force not condemnation without crime. But the deafening cry arose on all sides, "Crucify him!" "Crucify him." He saw, evidently, that if he was released, a tumult would ensue instantly. Indeed the assembly had lost all semblance of

reason. His honest statement, that he found no fault in him, his reasonable demand for some fixed accusation were drowned in a furious call for his death. In the midst of the disorder the priests, casting to the winds all their former charges, announced to Pilate their real reason for putting him to death: "We have a law; and by our law he ought to die; because he made himself the son of God." Pilate's agitation was intensified by this news.

He seems from the history to have been in a most painful state of feeling; to have gone in to where he had taken Jesus, and come out: to have put questions to his prisoner, and not to have waited for answer. It had been easy to escape from this distress. Had he said with decision, touch a hair of this man's head, and it will be over me; I protect him. Let insurrection come; he shall not be harmed; peace would have immediately returned to his breast. He had already set him up with Barabbas; what right had he thus to expose an innocent man? Man? aye, more than man. Look at that countenance and tremble.

Pilate had committed himself already; he had permitted the people to choose. After irresolute delay and irrepressible agitation, he ascends the judgment seat. It is evident that the crowd cannot be cajoled or managed; that they thirst for blood. He is about to give sentence, that it should be as they required; but another circumstance occurs. His wife, from sickness or weakness, has been asleep since himself awoke; and has awaked in fright, and with wringing hands is seeking her husband. Unable to adventure through the fierce crowd, she has sent a messenger to say from her; "see thou, have nothing to do with that just man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him." The dreadful future before her had been opened to her view. The vision had awaked her in terror.

This message raised his anxiety to the greatest height. The people in angry clamor, excited to the verge of tumult, demanded the death of the son of God; his own conscience and the divine warning through his wife, made him hesitate. Could he but have had the courage to do right! After an agonized pause he sends for water; and waits downcast until it is brought. Rising to attract universal attention,

he solemnly washes his hands, and says in a loud voice: "I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it." The people were ready with the response: "His blood be on us and on our children." Was Pilate clear? Did the water wash away the stain of blood? This was the hour of his life, the decision of an eternal destiny. The history of the Jewish people has for two thousand years been colored with blood from this hour.

III. He gave sentence, that it should be as they required; not as justice required, and God had warned: but as *they* required. The word has gone out of his mouth; the case is terminated: the soldiers immediately took possession of the prisoner, and led him into their hall, and by trumpet call summoned the whole band. Here they stripped him of his clothing, arrayed him in a worn-out royal robe, put a sceptre of reed into his hand, and, to make his appearance as a king complete, wove a crown of thorns, mature in Judea at this season, and put it on his head. They knelt before him thus arrayed, saying "hail, king of the Jews," and smote him with the reed upon his head, and spit upon him. A crown of weeds had been insulting; a crown of thorns driven deep into his temples suited them better.

During this cruel mockery, Pilate had occasion to pass through the hall, and seeing the meek and unresisting sufferer, anointed with his own trickling blood; and the galling ridicule with which he was being treated, felt his sympathies much moved; and thinking the people will certainly relent in their savage course, could they but behold him as I do now; he led him forth into the open portico, where he could be seen by all, and said: "Behold the man," "Behold I bring him forth to you; that ye may know that I find in him no fault at all," "Behold your king." But the sight only inflamed the multitude the more. The cry rose fiercer than before, "Away with him; crucify him. We have no king but Cæsar." "Whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar; if thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend." Their hatred knew no pity.

IV. After having passed sentence of condemnation, and afterwards sought to rescind it, Pilate shows his reluctance in this proceeding by proposing: "take ye him, and crucify

him." I have consented to his death; the warrant for his execution shall be signed with the seal of Rome; but at least suffer me to have no participation in the murder. Let no soldier or servant of mine be employed in this hateful business. Take ye him; use your own officers and men in this affair, and compel me not further. Ah! Pilate the water washed thy hands; but not thy conscience. Thou hast gone too far to retreat. Having yielded in the beginning; vain is it to expect to retract now. The enemies of Jesus were resolved that he should die under all the solemnities of a public execution; Pilate's assistance was indispensable. Roman power, as well as Jewish hate, must move in harmony against him. Pilate had hesitated, begged and maneuvered in vain. Dreadful had been the struggle through which he had passed.

During the trial Pilate from time to time conversed with his prisoner. He heard him calmly declare that he was a King; that his kingdom was not a worldly kingdom; that they who loved and followed the truth were his subjects. When Pilate marvelled greatly at his silence, and demanded of him, "hearest thou not?" "Speakest thou not to me?" "Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and power to release thee?" thus confessing his own responsibility, our Lord gave him fully to understand that he had no power against him, further than it was allowed from on high. "Therefore he that delivered me unto you," the high priest, "hath the greater sin;" even finding some kind of apology for the governor's conduct.

At several times before his condemnation, Pilate addressed him; but after the decisive word of doom, he spake no more with him. He had learned more of truth, and virtue, and duty than in all his life before. His whole previous experience was nothing, compared with the interest and impression of that morning, loaded with events of everlasting import. He had often condemned prisoners without compunction: at this trial pangs unfelt before had seized him. The noble and the vulgar had been arraigned before him, the wealthy and the outcast, Gentile and Jew; but never such

a being. The very sight of his mysterious submission had awed his inmost soul; as well as stirred in him an indescribable compassion.

The sequel of Pilate's life is clothed with a mournful interest. He was forever soured against those who had compelled him to the most nefarious and hated deed of his life. When the priests remonstrated against the inscription upon the cross, his answer conveys his feeling, "what I have written, I have written." From this time there was continual misunderstanding and contention between him, and the guilty rulers of the Jews; until on complaint made to Rome, he was removed from the province of Judea. After this memorable day, he seems never to have known peace: he could never efface from his memory the image of the patient sufferer, who cast himself on him for protection, and found it not. Life soon became a weariness; and his wife's vision was fulfilled in his suicide.

Who can but be moved with pity for poor Pilate! but many still follow his example. Many now sell Christ for less than thirty pieces of silver, perhaps. Many deny him as Peter did. Many renounce him for fear of man, as Pilate did. Eternal destinies are still often decided in a single day.

Why did the Jews so hate the man of Nazareth? Look at the accusations brought against him. Was it because he forbade paying tribute to Caesar? No. Was it because he made himself a King? They would willingly follow such a Messiah. They were waiting for just such an one to appear. Was it because he made himself the Son of God? No. This Tiberius Caesar, to whom they were so loyal, was not only an idolater, but had himself worshipped as a God. After a short time, his successor attempted to force his own image into the temple at Jerusalem to receive divine honors there. It was not the honor of Jehovah for which they were so jealous. No. The reason of their hatred was simply this. He was the Son of God. His works, his teaching, his life, his whole belongings incontestably showed it; and they knew it. Their subsequent history shows that they knew it; yet could never acknowledge the truth.

CHAPTER XXXI.

INNOCENCE OF JESUS.

PART I.—IN CONTRAST WITH MEN.

It is the perfect innocence of Jesus, that not only invests his whole history with an irresistible charm, but lends subduing power to the story of his unparalleled sorrows. If his entire harmlessness merely, though this is but a negative characteristic, can be realized, a new pathos is felt in every scene of his life. An affecting view of this is not so easily obtained, as of the more obvious points of his career. Moral beauty men are more slow in perceiving. Yet his work can never be appreciated but by them, who gain a realizing view of the supreme holiness of his character, outshining the splendor of his mighty works, as the sun extinguishes the petty lights of the sky. An indescribable and overwhelming elevation of unsullied purity in him, made a deeper impression on beholders, than all the attendant wonders which drew the gaze of the curious. The present object is to substantiate and impress:

I. The immaculate spotlessness of his character, and the striking innocence of his life: and this by the following considerations:

1. His conception was out of the common course of nature.

Much infidel blasphemy has been uttered about the manner of his conception and birth: and those have been found, who have rejected the gospel on this account: claiming, that blame could not attach to them for not discovering a Savior coming into the world as a child of infamy. The singularity of his life is a sufficient refutation of all such scandals. It was necessary that he should be introduced into the race; and be a man in the fullest sense, in body and soul. Prophecy had, from the beginning, announced him, as "the seed of the woman" without human father.

There is a propriety of his being born of a virgin, and of a virgin espoused and not yet married; and in fact of every circumstance in the Scripture account. By this peculiar management, he escaped altogether the taint of original sin. The body of the babe, made of the flesh and blood of Mary, was "that holy thing;" and to the end it remained "that holy thing." John the Baptist was "sanctified from the womb;" but Jesus needed no such sanctification. The poison of apostasy, communicated in ordinary descent, had never infected him. He was "separate from sinners," by his birth, as well as by his exalted nature.

2. The testimony of the Scripture on this point is very express. He is "the holy one of God," "that just one," "the most holy," or as the Hebrew reads, "the Holy of Holies." He forms a class by himself, which can include no other. Angels are holy, but they are mutably so. He is immutably holy. An impassable gulf lies between him and all others. "He is of purer eyes than to look upon sin, and he does not behold iniquity." There are sights from which men turn away sick at heart: Jesus does not look upon sin. "The heavens are unclean in his sight; and he chargeth his angels with folly." Before the terrors of his holy eye, this earth and sky, tainted by sin, will flee away; and no place be found for them. He came to this earth stripped of all the terrors of judgment; but the divine holiness manifested itself in as distinct and shining glory as did the divine power and wisdom: all beholders confessed voluntarily or involuntarily, not merely the spotlessness of his life; but his more than celestial inward purity. The fire, that shall ultimately wither transgressors, burned in his eye.

3. The fear of the people showed the same. There was no severity about him to inspire dread; even his anger is said to have been grief. Compassion beamed from his countenance; gentleness spoke in his voice; yet there was something about him that begat awe in every beholder. His miracles were all works of mercy; his words were all utterances of love; yet there was a fear of him which intimacy could not remove. The strange prayer of Peter: "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord," has

been the unspoken cry of thousands of hearts since. The officers, sent once to take him, feared to lay hands on him, paralyzed by his words. Their superiors rebuked their lack of nerve; but themselves afterwards durst not ask him any question. At several times he was threatened with stones; but none were ever thrown. After one of his kindest miracles in Capernaum, it is said: "They (the people) were filled with fear." Lu. v: 26. The Gadarenes "were taken with great fear," though the miracle just wrought among them was one of the most merciful. The fear of his intimate disciples increased to the very last.

4. His patience under the provocation of his enemies is proof of it. By no other on earth were such trials met. "They hated him without a cause." Righteous Abel was hated by his brother; but Abel was a sinner, and had glaring faults doubtless. In the best of men there is enough to hate. David was hated; but there was cause for censure. Daniel was hated; but Daniel was not perfect; perhaps there was in him at times a bitterness of feeling toward the oppressors of his people. Jesus Christ was hated "without a cause." The tenderest love provoked only hatred. Nothing do men hate more than a reprover. He felt their hatred. All the crimes that could disgrace a mortal, were not punished as the holiness of Jesus was. The world fell upon him with a fiercer vengeance than moved Cain against Abel.

The feelings of the Jewish rulers were so vindictive that sleep fled from their eyes. Jerusalem was in an uproar during the allotted hours of repose, animated by the same purpose as the infernal conclave sitting at the same time below. The story of the cruel insults and horrid sufferings, which he had to endure, is often told, but seldom realized. At a moment, when he seemed not to have a friend on earth; when the malice of the Sanhedrin was at its highest pitch; and the twelve had forsaken him, and the foremost of them was denying with curses that he had ever known him; the victim meekly raised his head and looked on the gathered crowd. His eye fell upon Peter in the midst of his denial, and there was such an unearthly kindness and pity in its look that it overwhelmed the guilty apostle. In

haste he fled, and covered his face, scarce able to refrain himself till he reached the porch. The same eye looked on the reviling priests; it had poured out tears over them on Olivet. How he looked!

Follow him to the cross. Perhaps the moment, when rage and spite were at their height, was when he was nailed to the wood. The king of Israel cannot deliver himself; he, who claimed equality with God, is shown to be impotent. The loudest fiercest triumph was then; the most savage derision. He was spurned as he lay defenceless, quivering in every limb. The spitting was doubtless renewed, and perhaps unhallowed feet smote deeper in the piercing thorns, or trampled the prostrate form. The voice, that will one day shake the earth and sky, spoke. The submission and kindness of its tone was enough to subdue a heart of adamant. It was to pray: "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do." It was not an empty wish; but the deep yearning of his heart. It was heard on high, and secured the forgiveness and salvation of these enemies; not of those among them, who had committed the unpardonable sin; but of all that reviling crowd, who had not put themselves beyond mercy's reach. He remembered them, when he ascended; and for their sakes commanded his apostles to "begin at Jerusalem." At that moment the sin and self-ruin of his murderers grieved him more than the torment of the cross. O! infinite love! The tenderest human heart is adamant compared with thine.

He was called to endure every species of suffering that man could inflict: and it seems to have been the determination of his foes to overcome his meekness if possible; and extort some angry railing: (it was usual to hear from the crucified the most fearful curses and imprecations.) To this end their efforts were directed; and for this they persevered in attendance around him: but in vain. They could as soon have shaken down the throne of God, or blotted the eternal out of being. His everlasting love was incapable of increase; but as man his sympathies only moved more intensely in their behalf. Had anything been able to destroy or abate the love, which Christ bore to men, the treatment he received on earth had done it: but

it was stronger than death and more insatiable than the grave. Waters did not quench it, nor floods poured upon it drown it.

5. His innocence is read in the feelings of Judas his betrayer. In a season of exasperation, Judas had agreed to betray his master; but he never believed that he would die. When he saw him unresisting, condemned; and beheld the frenzy of the people against him, the sunlight evidence of his Lord's divinity came back with overpowering force to his memory. It mattered not that men applauded his deed: his conscience was aroused never to be quieted again. He saw nothing, he heard nothing; he thought of nothing else. The image of his Master condemned to die revived the remembrance of his predictions. He rested not a moment: he rushed to the temple to cast away the price of innocent blood; he could not be absent from the judgment hall, nor from Calvary. How long he endured his agony is not known. Despair too deep for tears sat upon his brow; groans from a lost spirit issued from his bosom. Remorse would in time have killed him: he no longer shrinks from crime: he cannot live to see his victim executed. If he beheld the frowning heavens and the trembling ground, a deeper darkness gathered in upon his spirit, and it quaked with a direr dread. The crime, which is usually committed after months of previous torture, was by him decided on in a few hours. Judas knew his Master to be not only innocent: he knew him to be divine. Stronger testimony to truth was never left.

6. The innocence of Jesus is proclaimed by the feelings of Pilate. Pilate's guilt was not so glaring as that of Judas. He had not been an intimate companion of the Nazarene. He could flatter himself with the remembrance that he had endeavored to his utmost to deliver his prisoner. But to see Jesus was enough to convince the dying thief of his divinity: and it was enough for Pilate. He hardly needed the heavenly admonition through his wife. How studiously he sought to convince himself that he was not blameworthy in the matter; that he was overborne by violence and had protested against the act even after compliance. He found that there was no room in his memory for any-

thing but the calm and holy sufferer of that dreadful day. Care and business and pleasure were unable to banish the image of the Nazarene. He remembered how he had cast himself for protection on the judge and not found it. Though Pilate may have said little, yet he was an altered man. To the Jews he became fierce and implacable: in his ordinary behavior sour and morose. The play of hell fire was visible in his before quiet eye. Like Judas, he became a suicide; though remorse did its work more slowly.

7. The innocence of Jesus is proved by the changed character of the Jewish nation. The history of the Jewish nation from this date is the history of raving madmen. They had previously been quite remarkable for loyalty and faithfulness to treaties. Their national character underwent a change from this period on. They were ready to welcome false Christs, whose appearance showed, that they understood that the divinely announced time for the advent of the true Christ had come; according to the unmistakable predictions of their own scriptures. They seemed to be inwardly convinced that the expected king had been rejected; and they were therefore ready to grasp at the most forlorn shadow of anything, that could possibly turn out to be a Messiah to them. Their conduct shows as plainly as that of Judas and Pilate, that they were aware of the fact, which yet no tongue must utter, that their predicted Savior had been rejected and crucified. In another respect they resembled Judas and Pilate: they flinched from no crime whatever. The atmosphere they breathed was infernal. Their national existence for the few remaining years, was but one scene of crime, at which even heathen shuddered. The most desperate enormities, the most hellish dissensions, the most heaven-daring obduracy, infatuation and madness, the distant sight of which makes the blood run cold, make up the last chapter of their history. None would acknowledge it; but they seem to have known that the blood of innocence was "on them and on their children."

8. It is shown by the miserable end to which his persecutors came. Judas became a spectacle to all the attendants at the feast. Agitated to that degree, that he could not accomplish a sure and decent suicide, he fell headlong

and burst asunder in the midst; and all his bowels gushed out. He added another to the horrors of the awful day of Christ's death. Multitudes saw him: and the ghastly countenance, marked with the impress of despair, seemed more dread than even his disgusting body. He fixed his name upon the gloomy spot, cut up as it was by the holes of a potter's excavations. No one would own the haunted place; and though in the immediate vicinity of Jerusalem, the field was sold for thirty pieces of silver, and would not then have found a purchaser, had it not been for the fearful thirty pieces, of which the priests wished to dispose. And then it became a place to bury friendless strangers in; and no dead body was there interred, in whose favor a voice was left to remonstrate.

Pilate came to his miserable end more slowly, but by just as steady a progress as Judas. And what tongue can tell the calamities, that have befallen the Jewish people? The idolatry of their fathers, and the murder of the prophets were punished by a seventy years' captivity; but the death of Christ by a whirlwind of wrath which destroys still. If the children of that people are followed for two thousand years by the unrelenting judgments of heaven; O! what has befallen the guilty perpetrators of the crime, long since gone to their account! Good God, "who knoweth the power of thine anger?" Let it not "beat upon our naked souls in one eternal storm." All who opposed Jesus wrecked their own moral nature, hardened themselves into fiends, and dug their own graves.

9. Jesus never confessed sin. The holiest men have been fullest and most constant in the confession of guilt. If prayers have been answered, it has only been when the suppliants have made no reserve; but bewailed themselves as the chief of sinners. In the solemn hour of near approach to God, they have bowed far lower than the dust. No other prayers have been answered; but such as have been offered from hearts broken by a sense of personal guilt. The prayers of Jesus were always heard, and received immediate answer; but in them he makes no mention of sin, original or actual. He comes before the burning throne in his own name, bringing no atoning blood for himself; and

heaven bows to his petition. He comes as the beloved son, in everything about whom, the Father "is well pleased," and whose lightest wish heaven longs to gratify.

II. God would never permit a holy being to suffer. It is contrary to every attribute of his nature to do so. His people on earth are a sinful people; yet are they powerfully defended from every unnecessary pain. Chariots of fire and horses of fire surround them. Angels encamp about them. God's providence is a hedge about them; and however much their enemies, worldly and spiritual, desire their harm, their rage is utterly powerless. Satan may desire to sift them as wheat; but he can neither touch a hair of their heads, nor disturb their inward peace for a moment. If affliction were not better for them than rejoicing, God would never allow them to experience it. Sanctification is perfected only through suffering. Submission can never have its perfect work without sorrows. In unbroken prosperity, tears of repentance would soon cease to fall, and the dust of humility would soon be forsaken. God must needs afflict; and his love was not more tender when Christ died for our sins, than when he smites with the rod of his chastisement. Grief is absolutely needed for our purification; and God consents to it as a dire necessity. "Our inbred sins require our flesh to see the dust." But how seldom God afflicts. "His strokes are fewer than our sins, and lighter than our guilt." Like a tender parent, he hides his face in order to strike the children of his love; and when tears begin to flow, he counts them as they fall; he treasures them in his bottle; he turns away his anger, and stirs not up all his wrath; he permits them not to faint under the blow of his hand; but administers the rich and reviving cordials of his covenant to sustain the sinking spirit.

Even in the suffering of the lost he has no pleasure, tears of bleeding pity fell from the eyes of Christ over the obduracy of those who most richly merited the doom that came upon them. He slowly and reluctantly gives up the most hardened, and does not "willingly afflict nor grieve the children of men."

When the necessity of suffering by his people ceases to exist, and the work of sanctification is completed, and their spirits are received into heaven, sorrow and sighing will be known by them no more. All tears will be eternally wiped away; all occasion of tears will be forever removed. As soon will the throne of the eternal totter to its fall, as another tear rise to the ransomed eye. The walls and gates of heaven exclude everything that offends. Sin and sorrow must batter down the impregnable walls, before they can enter: they must strike through the protecting bosom of the redeemer, before they can reach the meanest inhabitant of that happy place. In that world they know good; but they know not evil. It would be contrary to the whole character of Jehovah to permit a pang, where sin unsubdued no longer makes it necessary. God has shown that he would sooner submit to suffering himself, than see his people experience it. He defends them by himself as their shield. Easier were it for the sun to shed cold and ice, than for Jehovah to inflict suffering. Sinless angels have never known it, and never will while they have being. God would as readily tempt to sin, as oppress with suffering. The radiant realm of glory is never darkened by a shade of misery.

III. Such being the revealed character of Jehovah, what an anomaly are the sufferings of Christ! If he is so tender of a creature, and so sparing of affliction, how can his love for his only begotten son be declared? and how can the agonies of Christ, inflicted by the Father's hand be explained? Why did he deal so terribly with the son of his love? God permitted him to fall into the hands of evil men. Jesus not only declined delivering himself; the righteous Father withdrew his protection. As one cast into a den of lions, or a cage of vipers, would be immediately beset, and every fang would at once be buried in his flesh; so Christ met the rage of an evil world. They had been for a time restrained by fear of him, and by the veneration which even the wicked have for goodness; but delay only made them more cruel in their hour of triumph. God spared him not from any insult. No exception was made from all the torments and indignities in the power of man

to inflict. And never were the wits of men more acute to devise evil, nor their malice more provoked. Martyrs have died; prophets and apostles have been slain; but Jesus Christ has a preëminence in suffering, beyond all that ever wept, and bled, and died on earth.

God also let loose against him the raging fiends of perdition. They had access to his soul to utter the most grievous and blasphemous proposals, and urge them. And well did Satan improve the opportunity. He was nigh him groaning and bleeding in the garden, to whisper that none could endure the awful doom of the violated law; that suffering was ungodlike, and might as well come on those who deserved it; that it were enough to drink the cup of gall and wormwood for friends, not for enemies; that they were not worthy, for whom he should do this great thing; that the best of them were ready to forsake and deny him (and one of his professed friends to betray him); that men did not thank him for his interference. And then the arch fiend groaned the groans of hell in his ear, and shrieked the woe! woe! woe! of the curse of God. And when all this failed to deter the Savior from his purpose of love, he flew with malicious haste to stimulate men to such a hellish rejection of him as should lead the great Redeemer to abandon in disgust the beings he had loved. The tempter had permission to do his utmost; the shield that protects saints was entirely withdrawn from the holy substitute.

If it was strange that God should permit all this to come upon his beloved son, how much stranger, that with his own hand he should afflict him. The hand of God was stretched out against him, as it never was against any transgressors on the earth. All his previous judgments were shadows, compared with what came upon Christ. The hand of God touched him, and this it was which made him cry out. In Gethsemane marks of suffering are seen which neither men nor devils caused. The Redeemer was smitten to the heart. O! what means this darkness! what means this moving of the foundations of the earth! Guilty men, you need not fear; Jesus prays: "Father, forgive."

No wonder if God's vengeance falls on transgressors. It is not matter for wonder that a flood swallowed up a

whole generation; that fire consumed Sodom and Gomorrha; nor that judgment overtook Korah, Herod, or Ananias; but why came they on Jesus? What meaneth the heat of this great anger? It was against sin. He suffered for sins he never knew. His soul was made an offering for sin. Is not the imputation of human sin clearly seen in this? The little lamb at the altar died for sin, yet for no act of its own; but crime was confessed over it, and laid upon its head. No more did Christ die for any act of his own.

“Yes, our sins have done the deed:

Drove the nails that fixed him there.”

The cause of all was human sin; on this heaven frowned: under the weight of this earth trembled, God's anger was against our sin; not against Christ. It was evidently the teaching of every sacrifice, that a being perfectly harmless and innocent, and incapable of transgression, can be made by his own consent, and God's appointment to suffer for the sins of others. This truth was uttered in the temple rites every day, until the predicted lamb made his appearance. It was forced on the attention. It was the sum of the only ceremony, which heaven instituted for human worship. It was to be repeated as often as worship was offered.

Let it be remembered, that others than the guilty Jews contributed to the anguished suffering of the holy sacrifice. Every tongue of man has mocked; every head wagged; every lip reviled; every heart rejected him. In the garden there was no crown of thorns, no cruel scourge, no cross, no insulting reproach; but there human sin began to be laid upon him. Every individual of the fallen family added his portion to the burden. The great Redeemer groaned for sins that never caused their actors a tear. He shed for them tears of blood. On their account the sword of divine justice pierced his inmost heart. “The chastisement of our peace was upon him.” Though guilt is not transferable; punishment may be. It is matter of wonder that the account of his torments can be read with dry eyes and unfaltering voice by those for whom his blood was shed. Men

are harder than the rocks; or their hearts would be rent by the story. The transfer just spoken of must take place by consent of parties. The holy sufferer heartily consented to bear our iniquities: the faith required by the gospel is an adoption by us of God's method of saving sinners; it is to be our own hearty consent.

CHAPTER XXXII.

INNOCENCE OF JESUS.

PART II.—SUPERIORITY TO TEMPTATION.

Nothing in the history of Jesus appears more strange, than that he should consent to listen to the temptations of the evil one. Were the gospels a tale fabricated by designing men, such a chapter would not have been introduced, relating that the infinitely holy one submitted to the proposals of the great arch fiend. As the fact is indisputable, a reason for it can be discovered in the position which he occupied as champion of humanity; and so under obligation to meet and defeat every enemy of the race he loved. This liability to the temptations of Satan is one of the most horrid evils incident to our condition. Sins, at which human nature, bad as it is, hesitates, are sometimes kept before the mind, invested with every attraction that can solicit compliance; while at the same time there is a strange forgetfulness of obligation and duty. Though the lure be rejected at first with decision, yet the enemy often prevails by persistence and importunity.

A distinction is to be made between the impulses of our own nature, and those suggestions which insinuate themselves into our thoughts in defiance of our will, and besiege our souls sleeping and waking, until evil passions are thoroughly inflamed; and a conflict ensues painful and long-continued between desire, and resolution backed by conscience and the word of God. The man has never lived, who could, unaided, stand against the wiles of the devil, though repelled at the first with determined resolution. Doubtless there are those who pass through life without learning the terrors of the great enemy of souls. Some never experience them before the hour of death. Probably a man is never fiercely assaulted oftener than once in a

life-time; but then for a season he knows the bitterness of hell. It is said of Jesus, that "he *suffered* being tempted;" his humanity was assailable, and open to all the impressions common to ourselves.

The object of the tempter was so adroitly to conceal sin, as by solicitation to secure his consent to evil undetected. He was permitted every advantage in the contest. Jesus was abandoned to his efforts, it would seem with reluctance on his part, being "driven" into the wilderness, after long fasting had exhausted him, and physical distress would have made a man an easy prey to murmuring and complaint. He was "driven" into the wilderness, just as he was driven to the cross, with an inward recoil and hesitation of soul. There he felt the torment of keen hunger; and the tempter had all the advantage which a fainting body, depressed spirits, and apparent desertion could give. The human soul is easily roused to fault-finding by privation, or only the foreboding of it, or by continued neglect on the part of heaven. But in the condition of Jesus, all things met that could possibly predispose a mortal to repining; that, with a fair field and all odds on his side, the great adversary might be completely foiled.

I. The first temptation was, that Jesus should deliver himself from the state of privation in which he was. The Redeemer, "being formed in fashion as a man," owed the same submission to the Father's will which man does. Though able by his own underived power to accomplish anything whatever, yet he was limited to such works as the Father had given him to do. God had by the most unmistakable direction led him into the wilderness, remote from human succor, and "with the wild beasts," and left him unsupplied; left him until he felt the desertion. Compliance with the tempter's proposal would have been consenting to free himself from suffering, which God had brought upon him. Such yielding was all the tempter desired; it involved a great principle. It would lead directly to the abandonment of the whole work of atonement.

If Christ would escape by his own power from the smallest suffering, and once act on the principle suggested; he would necessarily decline the unutterable sorrows, which

lay in his way to the cross and the tomb. To escape from suffering by unwarrantable ways is in itself as sinful as refusing obedience to God in the most important matters. To dash the cup from his lips in Gethsemane, and violate all the engagements entered into with the Father, on the ground of which unnumbered sins had already been forgiven, would have been no more guilty. To decline present suffering was to decline the atoning sufferings. The great adversary makes no allusion to them however, they are kept out of view; and he simply proposes that the Savior relieve himself from present ills.

“Command that these stones be made loaves:” it depends on your word, was the temptation. It contained an acknowledgment of his ability; and seemed to proceed from one, who had sympathy for him in his distress. This is the way to approach a man, in order to seduce him by flattery and sympathy. We are not informed what arguments were used; but arguments were not lacking. Doubtless in the most insinuating way it was suggested: why should an all-sufficient being suffer privation?; that the meanest angel in heaven was secure forever from the experience of it; that want and distress were ungodlike; that it was possible to yield and supply his wants, and yet atone when the hour came.

Ah! how vain! Let the foam rive the hoary rock; let darts of straw destroy leviathan; let the breath of man overturn the universe; or crush the throne of God: these are more possible, than by cunning and concealed temptation to seduce the Messiah.

How divine the answer of the Lord Jesus! He quoted words spoken long ago in that very wilderness, perhaps in that very place. “It is written: man shall not live by bread alone; but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” It implied a faith in God, that could never for a moment admit a doubt. Bread is not necessary: God has thus far sustained me, and he will still sustain. It implied that to do the will of God was to him better than meat and drink; and that he took more intense delight in suffering, when God required him to suffer,

than he could possibly take in the supply of food; that his fainting body could not find such refreshment in food, as his soul found in submission.

This was the constant feeling of Jesus, not confined to this hour. His face was set as a flint to refuse no sorrow, that lay in his way; that he would not raise his own arm to defend himself; or even open his lips to pray that God would deliver him. Grace can enable a Christian to suffer without repining; can enable a Paul to glory in affliction; but Christ found as great satisfaction in suffering, as he had taken in the glory which he had with the Father before the world was. Indeed in the experience of saints submission is heaven. Vain was it for Satan to tempt him: as soon could a madman persuade the world, that the sun does not shine. A proof of this very submission in Christ, the tempter had in his own ability to approach him. A word from him would have driven him to the abyss, "his own place." Christ exercised for more notable submission in being subject to temptation, than he did in the privation of bread.

The last and great temptation in Gethsemane belongs to this class. It was to deliver himself from suffering. And in that case the tempter had everything to back his plea. Sensitive nature shrinks from suffering, and can but flinch and hesitate in the prospect. Our light affliction is grievous: but woe unknown on earth was then coming on the holy victim. The dark cloud hung over him; and Sinai's thunders were uttering their voices; and lightnings of the wrath of God were flashing. This, that was coming, was no kind stroke of God's chastising rod, designed for the good of the sufferer: but the blow of his avenging sword, the outpouring of vials, in which was no mixture of mercy. It was penal sorrow, that would have filled the souls of men with an eternity of anguish. Even Christ feared as he entered into the cloud; and prayed, that if possible, the cup might pass. Though his truth and honor and covenant bound him to endure, yet he shrank. Oh! how terrible that which so affected our great surety! There was the deepest submission in the prayer; but the trial tested that submission to the quick.

Oh! how Satan sought to aggravate those fears, and improve that hesitation. The horrors of damnation were all assembled; and every ingredient of bitterness, that earth and hell could add, was added. How was it represented, that men were no better than devils, equally enemies of God; and that, though he died for them, they would mock at his dying agonies; and like the furies of hell, exult around his cross: that to shed his blood would be sweeter to them than all the pleasures of righteousness; and that after all his efforts, men would refuse to be won by his love. The eagerness of Satan and the excitement of the pit were at their height. Hell gnashed its teeth at the salvation of men, and pined in envy, and struggled against it; and will continue to do so till the very last. On this subject, lost spirits were eloquent; pleas were not wanting; and devils more guilty than men, in that they sinned in their own persons, and fell by their own act, and not in a progenitor, urged and plead and raged, with the fury of spirits already damned, to divert the son of God from his purpose to save men. Their whole heart was in it: but what did they effect? Christ submitted to receive every drop of the cup of trembling. When lying at death's door in Gethsemane, under a weight of mental anguish, under which the poor body could not exist, he would not even assume miraculous strength by his own power to enable him to endure. He relinquished himself entirely to God's disposal. Such submission, he owed to the Father only as man.

II. The second temptation belongs to an entirely different class. It was to work a miracle for a selfish and unholy purpose. Presumption is a false, unwarranted, and conceited assurance of God's favor. It is an easy thing for the great adversary to inveigle a mortal from a triumphant faith into a groundless presumption, by ministering to his pride. He has succeeded in this strategy with the holiest men of history; and essayed the same management in the present case. Finding his subject standing upon the sublimest platform of an exalted faith, he next attempted to wean him over to a criminal excess of confidence. He said to him, standing upon a pinnacle of the temple: "Cast thy-

self down;" probably in view of the wondering crowd below. It was a general expectation, that the Messiah would make his first public appearance in the temple, according to prophecy as they interpreted it. Perhaps Anna and others abode in the temple on account of this expected revelation. So that this temptation was not to presumption simply; else it had been enough to take him to some precipice in the wilderness, that he might cast himself down from thence; but it was a proposal to him to exert his power presumptuously, in order to win acceptance by the people. It was equivalent to saying: alight from the skies unhurt before the eyes of the wondering multitude; and they will at once welcome thee as the expected deliverer. The promise of God warrants the venture. And he quoted or rather misquoted the text.

The temptation was an invitation to the holy one to perform a miracle for show, and to gratify unhallowed curiosity. He would do nothing for the purpose of gaining admiration or securing reception. Many feel an astonishment that his works were of so unsensational a kind. It is a common idea that a grander scale of operations would have better suited his claims. While the most amazing wonders were effected by Moses and Joshua and Elijah; even these were far inferior to what might have been expected of the incarnate Jehovah. There is a monotony in the account of his miracles; and they were less striking than the wonders of the old dispensation. Blind eyes indeed opened at his bidding; diseases let go their hold; and death obeyed his powerful word: but all occurred in remote places, among the poor, in the meanest villages of the country, or by the roadside. If at his word worlds had sprung into space, and suns had flashed into radiance: why not greater appearance of majesty in the works of his ministry?

This temptation admitted the highest claims of the son of Mary. That he possessed creative power, many of his works demonstrate; as well as that the elements were subject to his control; and he governs them still. If casting himself down unhurt were to him easy as breathing, as his ascension afterwards evidenced: why withhold any proof that might be demanded?

The answer is plain. While he possessed ample power to accomplish this or any other feat, that could be named, as God: as man he was under the same limitations as other men as to duty. Works were given him to do. It were a heinous sin to abandon the method assigned by infinite wisdom; in order to obey the call of impudent curiosity, or seek reception by the gathered multitude. He would obey the call of providence, when suffering presented itself before him; but would heed no other call. He was to be no wonder-worker for the gaping crowd: his works were to be such as became a human messenger, and such as would exhibit the ineffable tenderness and yearning of his soul for men. The world is astonished that he caused so little sensation during his life. As a mighty earthquake shook Jerusalem at his death; a far mightier concussion shook society then. During his life no man, as it were, "heard his voice in the street;" at his death, the world was turned upside down by him. That he should change the programme of his course at the dictation of folly and sin is not supposable.

His holy nature detected the abominable sin proposed by the tempter. Presumption was the devil's great trap, by which he could catch those who could not be otherwise ensnared. When a saint cannot be easily betrayed into outward transgression, his soul can be made at almost any time to swell; and secure in the assurance of God's favor, he will venture unwarrantably. To nothing is human nature more prone: the world is full of it. The reply of our Lord was: "it is written, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" by any foolhardy act, to which no promise of security is attached. It was enough for Satan to know that Christ saw the snare. Henceforth he threw off all guise; sought no longer to conceal himself; but boldly solicited his victim to the most flagrant sin.

This humble subjection of Jesus to the Father was manifest during his whole course. Pride had no place in him. He was in no excited haste to verify his pretensions. The works given him to do gave sufficient evidence of his personality. It is not the greatness, the awe-inspiring character of the miracles that convinces; it [is the manner in

which he wrought them; by the word of his power. This power was inherent in him; because greater wonders were wrought by the disciples in his name. If the Father had been the ultimate fountain of the power; the works should have been wrought in his name. But Christ was the fountain-head of the power: and "his name, through faith in his name," effected everything. The faith due to God was claimed by Christ, the act of highest worship which a creature could possibly offer.

III. The last temptation combined all the seductions of the world in a single show. In order to understand this foul temptation, in which a desperate assault was made by the adversary without disguise, and all the most powerful weapons he could wield were used; it is to be remembered that the Jewish nation were looking for a great worldly conqueror and victorious king. It ran in their dreams, that his appearance would compel his own people to a man to receive and welcome him; that he should reëstablish the throne of David, and make Jerusalem his capital; that the eyes of an admiring world should be fixed upon him; and that all nations should flow together to Jerusalem, give up their idolatry and observe the law of Moses; and if any refused subjection and allegiance, they should be broken in pieces, as a potter's vessel by a rod of iron.

They seemed to see the time approaching when Jerusalem would become the metropolis of a reformed world, in which the knowledge of the one, living, and true God would prevail as the waves in the ocean. Peace was to be the order of his kingdom; and forgetting all animosities, the subject nations were to sit down under his shadow with great delight. God's chosen Israel was to inherit the earth. The mighty change in the world was to be effected by the appearance of the Messiah, promised from the beginning, whose glory and grace should ravish the hearts of all men. These expectations were rooted in their prejudices, and went far in moulding their national character. They imagined that the overwhelming greatness and pomp of their nation's king, far transcending Solomon's, would dwarf all previously beholden.

Taking advantage of these anticipations of the people, the tempter took the Savior into an exceeding high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. Filling out the horizon of view, he caused to pass before his vision all that is desirable and alluring in the whole world; the magnificent grandeur of the Cyruses and Alexanders, their pomp and power, their gold and gems, their world-wide empire. He pictured before him all that is desirable in honors, all that is satisfying in pleasures, and all that is ennobling in power for good; and gave time for every item in the grand scenery to be contemplated, and to produce its full impression. Jerusalem the golden appeared the centre of a loyal world; all nations, that God had promised to the Messiah, being cheerfully subject, and himself the object of universal adoration.

Dilating upon the glowing panorama, he placed in contrast the life of poverty and contempt; the rejection of a scornful world; the bitter and appalling hatred of men; the death of anguish, unalleviated by the consoling voice of a single friend; rendered as dreadful as the wrath of an angry heaven could make it. He showed the buffeting and spitting, the crown of thorns, the cross with its fearful spikes, the countenances of men, swelling with ungovernable fury; and, pointing to what awaited him, if he persisted in his purpose, he proposed: All this glory will I give you without suffering, "if you will fall down and worship me." All that is to be gained by dying, is the subjection of the world; I promise you as much without a single pain. Come as a worldly king, and I pledge you that the Jews shall receive you; the world shall submit; I have control over them. And having possession of the avenues by which the human imagination is approached, he flared the attractive pageant before the mind of the lowly Jesus, till its full effect was gained. For far less he had often bought the souls of men, and few had he ever found, who, to gain the promised preëminence, would not consent to the foulest crimes. But he had another kind of antagonist to deal with now.

The devil's boast, that he gave the kingdoms of the world to whom he would, was not so empty as it at first

appears. His temptations have undoubtedly had effect chiefly in high places, where the strong attractions of dominion and power are felt, to gain which, ambitious ones have in cases innumerable bartered their very souls. The elevation of his favorites, who would effectually accomplish his designs, he has often secured; and appears to have controlled for generations, the operations of the governments, whose aim has been to destroy the church. Indeed of the great anti-Christian power now existing it is stated: "the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority." He is the devil's great agent and commissioner: his government is the devil's great engine for the extirpation of the true church. Satan is at the bottom of the whole scheme: his counsel directs in every plan, and his arm is stretched out, when the blood of the faithful flows.

He well knew that the slave and worshipper of worldly grandeur was a worshipper of himself; and at this time made no secret with the Redeemer. He proposed boldly: "fall down and worship me." In reply, the powerful word of Christ, unable longer to listen, drove him to his distance, and terminated the temptation. Abashed he shrunk away in the shame of utter and hopeless defeat. He still nourished hope, however, of ultimate success, when the dread reality of the cross in all its horrors should immediately impend. Knowing also that his antagonist was a perfect man with all the infirmities incident to human nature, he never abandoned hope of victory in the end.

It is worthy of note, that the tempter conceded to our Jesus the possession of unlimited power, absolute dominion and the full disposal of himself, as being under no control or necessity of submitting to suffering except by his own deliberate consent. The great adversary did not succeed in awakening in him the first breathing of corrupt desire. "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." "He knew no sin." He passed uncontaminated through the ordeal. The high elevation of unsullied purity, to the full conception of which even sinful mortals cannot attain, was sustained by our Jesus to the last, and knew no shadow of a change. Heaven and earth could sooner

pass, than change take place in him. His face was set as a flint toward Calvary. On the ground of his future atonement, sins had been forgiven through four thousand years: and his suffering though future was as certain as if already past.

It was humiliation indeed unspeakable to lend his ear to the foul suggestions of the fiend. He submitted to it, only because it is one of the miseries incident to our fallen humanity. When Satan at the last grasped and urged the only available temptation, the bitterness of the cup, and the unworthiness of men, it was using weapons already proved powerless. In terrible disappointment he exhausted all his malice in accumulating distress upon the head of the innocent victim, who was made to taste of every possible cup of woe, and descended to the lowest depths of sorrow.

If men realized the evils that await them during the course of a life time, as old age and experience realize them, and it were left to our choice whether to live or not; the cup of life is so imbittered by our light afflictions, that there is not one who would not decline tasting it. Few and evil are our days; and hardly could a man be found willing to live life over again. We have the heart to live only because we are ignorant of what we are to meet. Jesus Christ had the knowledge of all that awaited him; and what is all that befalls men in a world of mercy compared with what came on Christ: by a word he could have escaped it; and yet he was steadfast to his purpose. "Our misery touched his heavenly mind." He loved, and "he loved to the end."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

BEARING OUR SIN.

“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree.”
1 Pet. 2; 24.

It is difficult to fix any meaning on the words, “bare our sins,” other than that Jesus bore the punishment due to us on account of our sins. This is the only meaning of the words in the books of Moses, where they frequently occur. The language unquestionably refers to the ceremony of laying the hand upon the head of the atoning lamb or bullock, while a crime was being publicly confessed, on account of which it was to be offered as a sacrifice. The sin was laid upon it, and it died in consequence, and thus bare the sin. In the same manner Christ bare our sins.

Of all the wonders of a wonderful God, this is infinitely the most wonderful. The limitless creation out of nothing is matter of exhaustless wonder; the upholding of all things by the word of his power, still increases our wonder; but knowing the hatefulness and injustice of sin and its opposition to God; that he should be able to forgive iniquity, transgression, and sin, surpasses in wonder; and the universe is palsied with surprise on learning, that this forgiveness is possible on account of the vicarious sufferings of the second person of the Godhead. It is mentioned in the verse as most remarkable, “who *his own self* bare our sins.” The very God against whom sin is committed, whose prerogative it is to punish, condescends himself in human form to atone. Relief might have been expected sooner from any other quarter. From the throne heaving and quaking like Sinai, its emblem, with vengeful thunders struggling to get free for the destruction of the transgressors, a voice struck upon a stupefied universe: “Deliver them from going down to the pit; for I have found a ran-

som." "I have laid their help on one who is mighty." The words of Peter teach, that the atoning sufferings of Christ were those of the closing scene of his life. Though he was a sufferer through his whole career, yet at the last, he "was made a curse." In his death he atoned.

1. Nothing can be more unscriptural than the notion, that a man can, in this short life, bear the punishment of his own iniquities. This is indeed a world of sorrow; a vale of tears; wave of affliction follows wave; the light is but darkness; but the sufferings encountered here are not penal; but disciplinary, and intended for our good. Yet God has sometimes punished in this life: but how does he punish? Instances are given in his word; though the Bible nowhere declares; that a full and adequate retribution was inflicted in any case.

David's sin in numbering the people of Israel, lay not in the act of enumeration: God himself had commanded a like numbering in the wilderness; but in the pride that dictated it, with which people and king were alike infected. This was a sin that did no harm to society; it was not an offence against man: pride God hates. The victims of the pestilence which ensued numbered seventy thousand.

Hezekiah, in the matter of the ambassadors from the king of Babylon, sent to congratulate him on his miraculous recovery from the grave, fell into the same condemnation. Flattered by the notice of the great idolater into a sense of his own distinction, he boastfully exhibited all his treasures, forgetting his death-bed humility and his groanings out of the dust. This pride was in no sense a harm of any human being; yet for it, God sent his prophet to denounce to him, that the treasures should all be carried to Babylon; and his own children be eunuchs in the palace of its king. The agonized repentance of Hezekiah alone prevented the fulfillment at once in his own day; yet was it soon fulfilled, and to the very letter.

Moses sinned by the same pride and presumption, and for it was forbidden to enter the promised land; his only earthly wish remaining being to die in the land of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

The children of Israel, after their deliverance from Egypt, and sustentation through the wilderness, refused, on the very borders of Canaan, to pass over and possess it. They charged upon Jehovah, that he could not give them the possession promised. Their sin was unbelief; a sin that did no injury to mortal; but it is the sin which more provokes the Most High, and which he punishes more severely than any other. They were condemned to leave their carcases to bleach in the desert, and not an adult to tread the land of promise. "And ye shall know my breach of promise, saith the Lord?"

Ananias for a lie to the Holy Ghost that hurt no man, and no worse than is told every day, fell in death, with the lie upon his lips.

Herod, for permitting the audacious flattery of the people, was smitten of an angel, and eaten of worms, while he lived. Pride God hates.

Two thousand years ago, the Jewish nation rejected Christ with unexampled scorn and hatred, imprecating his blood on their own heads and their children's. Their sin was no greater than that of Voltaire and Paine, and those in every age who deny the Lord that bought them. And what have been the consequences of that sin? They are not yet all told. For eighteen centuries Jewish blood has flowed like water; scarcely is there a land that has not been soaked with it; and "for all this his hand is stretched out still." The Jews remain to this day scattered, despised, and down-trodden, with no power to relieve themselves, and blinded judicially to the Savior, whom their fathers crucified. In their dispersion, a sword was drawn out after them, that is not yet sheathed. God's awful anger cannot be told in one generation.

Are any man's sins thus punished, his pride, his unbelief, his falsehoods? Ah! the first drop of the cup of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God could not be drunk in this world. And the Bible does not say, that in any of these cases the punishment was all that divine justice requires; it gives us to understand the very contrary.

David's great sin in the matter of Uriah was terribly visited in this world. Two of his own sons were cut off by

the most bloody death; one of whom God raised up to hunt his father's life, and pursue him like an avenger of blood. The sword departed not from his house forever. And yet God expressly declared by the prophet that this sin was forgiven. What! so terribly avenged, and yet forgiven! Yes, a doom reversed, whose horrors we in this life know little of.

"There is a death whose pang
Outlasts the fleeting breath."

If there is future suffering, it is endless. Let it be once admitted that the Bible speaks of misery hereafter, and the worm that gnaws will never die, the fire that is kindled will never be quenched. Worlds and suns may wear out and fade away; but God's anger will never, never be told; Jehovah will never say, it is enough. Tremendous being! How fearful to fall into thine avenging hands! If for the crucifixion of Jesus, an inexorable curse has hunted the children of that nation for two thousand years, O! what has been the doom of the original transgressors, long since gone to their account! And what awaits those who imitate the same example of unbelief! Let us not fall into his avenging hands.

2. It is passing strange that such a God should forgive sin. Mercy is by no means necessary to our conception of a perfect character. A perfect being must indeed be infinitely good; but it is not necessary that he should be good to the transgressor of his laws. The character of God seemed undoubtedly perfect in the view of angels, when the existence of such an attribute as mercy was unknown; and complete also: no excellence was lacking to fill out the circle of his perfection. He was worthy of their entire love and confidence and service: and the knowledge of his purpose to redeem men, communicated to those holy beings, imparted at once deeper discoveries in the mystery of the Godhead than they had made during their whole previous existence. Boundless glories, brighter than had illuminated the past, broke at once upon their astonished vision, and excited raptures before unknown. These glories

inspired their song upon the plains of Bethlehem, over the advent of the Son of God to earth. It was as great a revelation to them as to men.

Unprincipled rulers more readily pardon crimes; and it is plain that it is chiefly the unprincipled who clamor for the abolition of capital punishment. To condone a capital offence is often treason to the community. The mighty question arises in men's thoughts, shall Jehovah forgive? Satan never believed forgiveness to be possible to transgressors, when he tempted the parents of our race. He supposed that men would be doomed, as he himself was, to an endless exclusion from the favor of God, by one transgression. He thought that by his success in tempting, he had secured the utter condemnation of the new order of intelligent creatures. Many a dying sinner has left it as his testimony, notwithstanding all the assurances to the contrary with which the Bible is filled, that God cannot forgive; that there is in sin something so opposite to his nature, and repugnant to his holy character; that he can never pass it by unpunished: in short that he cannot be God, and fail to punish transgression. Sin is indeed unpardonable. He consents to release the sinner only on the ground of the satisfaction to the law rendered by the Lord Jesus Christ. He is never reconciled to the sin: but "there is forgiveness with him that he might be feared." Christ has paid the debt. He has suffered in the place of the transgressor.

The principle of substitution pervades the whole revelation from the time of Abel. The victim on the altar was a substitute. The passover lamb died in the place of the first-born of the family. In every house in the land of Egypt, a life was to be taken, blood had to be shed: the angel passed over the houses, whose doors were already marked with blood. The lamb of the temple altar was a substitute. Its life was not an equivalent of its Master's life; but it was freely given for it and in place of it, when that Master's life had been forfeited by his crime. Jesus is our lamb, so called throughout the New Testament, twenty-seven times in the single book of Revelation. His death is called "a sacrifice," "a sacrifice for sins," "an offering

for sin," whose sins? not his own; for he was "without sin." His blood is called a "propitiation for the sins of the world." All the good bestowed on us is bestowed for his sake: his is the merit which procures it. He purchased us, and for us all the joys we receive. "There's ne'er a gift his hand bestows, but cost his heart a groan."

This principle enters into the every-day life of men. How often do cases occur, in which men owe their escape from impending destruction to the voluntary death of another. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." A lady, sitting carelessly in a third story window of a Philadelphia residence, with a child in her lap, lost her balance, and was in danger of falling to the sidewalk. A single moment and a single movement remained to her; she could have saved herself by that movement, and have left the child to fall. She used the last motion, that was in her power, to push the child back to safety, while herself was dashed to death on the pavement below. She had a right to give her own life, and save her child. Jesus had a right to give himself a sacrifice for sinners. Impelled by mighty love he did it.

3. How great and important a being he must have been to stand before a sin-avenging God, and answer for the sins of the world! He was no less than supreme. He must have been as high as the immutable law, the basis of Jehovah's throne. His offering must have possessed a merit beyond computation in order to offset the unending condemnation of sinners. His disciples were much more impressed with his humanity than with his divinity; it was so near and appreciable; the same may be true of ourselves. A full comprehension of his divinity is beyond the reach of the highest creatures in existence: hence the full force of the admission of his Godhead is not easily realized. Our understanding of his real greatness is not obtainable from a consideration of his miracles. They were displays of his power on the smallest conceivable scale. It was part of his humiliation to perform only works level to human observation. They were a hiding of his greatness.

His disciples saw his miracles and wondered; what if they had seen suns light at his bidding, and beheld him adjust the balancings of worlds in their measureless orbits! These were made "by him and for him." They would never have been brought into being, unless he had covenanted with the Father to give his life and soul for sinners. Three of his disciples saw him transfigured, and his countenance did "shine as the sun." But what if they had seen the glory which he had with the Father, before the world was: when a coronet of suns were too dark for his crown; and the uncreated light was unapproachable, which no man could see and live! They saw Moses and Elias bow to him and sink before his superiority. But what was this to what one of these same heard: "and all things in heaven and on earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them heard I saying: "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth on the throne and unto the lamb forever and ever." They were filled with amazement to see him raise the dead. But at the last day his voice shall wake the sleepers of all the ages. He shall wrap together the heavens as a scroll, and fold them up as a garment; and they shall be changed. From his face this sin-polluted earth and sky shall flee away as guilty things; and no place be found for them.

Wonder was boundless to see all departments of nature obey him: but he sways the sceptre of dominion over an empire, in comparison of which this earth is an atom. Herschell with his great refractor saw nebulae resolve into distant universes of limitless extent; they are but part of Christ's dominion. Men by the side of him are but as the small dust of the balance, unworthy even of being blown away. They are but a thing of naught, and less than nothing and vanity. His miracles were but works suitable to a human messenger. The intolerable brightness of the God-head was veiled with a veil of thick clay, through which even his favored few did not see.

The intensely acute sensitiveness of the God-man must not be overlooked. Coarser natures have less capacity of feeling than those more finely organized. The more refined

the nature is, the more keenly susceptible it becomes to impressions of all kinds. The extreme and surpassing keenness of divine sensibility is beyond a creature's conception.

4. How dreadful must have been the sufferings which atoned for the sins of the world? It was not only necessary that our Redeemer should be divine; but that his sufferings should be sufficient to atone: and of these God is the only judge. On this point the common impressions are as far below the real facts, and as unworthy of the subject, as they can be on any subject. The attention of the multitude is engrossed in the contemplation of the pains of the mortal body, the scorn and taunts of the world, and its terrible ingratitude. In each of these there was much that was dreadful; but possibly they hardly deserve the emphatic notice they secure, when compared with the cup brought to his lips by the hand of sin-avenging justice.

Others, noting the keen anguish of his soul, belittle the dreadful history by accounting for it, as caused by the immediate prospect of what was to be endured, or by a more vivid view of the evil of sin in God's sight. Either supposition is derogatory to the omniscience of the holy sufferer. The prospect was ever distinctly before him: his knowledge of the evil of sin could not be more clear. It is asserted by this class of interpreters, that the angel, who appeared in Gethsemane, was sent to remind him of considerations which might excite him to firmer decision. How unworthy of the stupendous subject!

The depth of his mental anguish may be inferred from the fact, that his body needed miraculous support in order to strengthen him to endure it. The most astonishing signs of an inexplicable anguish show themselves, not produced from the presence of any human enemy. Nothing like it was ever known. The sufferings and death of Christ stand alone, not to be classed with any known experiences. Remorse, foreboding and despair never produced phenomena so astounding. Here was a sufferer endued with unyielding fortitude, possessed of a composure which nothing had been able to shake for a moment, and a strength

which it was impossible in the nature of things to overcome; who in horror exclaimed: "my soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death."

The human body seemed to be on the very verge of dissolution by mere mental anguish. A profuse sweat is one of the precursors of death: the blood forsaking its accustomed channels mingled with it, forming great drops. Instances in which something slightly similar has occurred, are on record; but in all such death has almost immediately supervened. He knew the fierceness of the anger of Almighty God against sin: he also knew what it was to assume the responsibility for the sins of the world. The cup had in its mixture the murderer's heart, the liar's tongue, the pollutions of sensuality, the greed and crimes of avarice, the rebellions of unbelief, and all the enormities which have made the creation to groan through the ages. The cross, the shame, the insults though terrible were light in comparison. Martyrs have endured the like and triumphed over them.

The depth of his sufferings may be inferred from the prodigies attending his death. They were evidently connected with *his* death, and no ordinary natural phenomena. The sun had arisen as usual, and shone with its ordinary brightness. No eclipse could occur at this time: no cloud veiled the sky. The fury of men had done its work: their victim had been hung amid unheard of blasphemy upon the cross. For three hours the storm of mockery had beat upon him. But at its meridian height, the sun lost its light, and hung as a world of blood above their heads; and through the dismal shade men faintly saw the tombs yawning and heard the fall of the doors of stone, while the earth uttered groans from its deep caverns.

This was no ordinary earthquake. Such may open fissures in the ground, and may displace lofty rocks; but never rend them. This movement tore the mighty rocks in sunder, not according to the direction of the natural strata but across them; it opened the tombs of the dead; its force was expended largely upon the temple, which it shook until its strong and heavy veil was torn in sunder, beginning at the top to the bottom; yet displaced not a

stone. It was unaccountable. When a man grieves, only his own body is disturbed: the eyes weep; the frame is convulsed; the heart almost stands still. When Jesus suffered, nature itself shuddered and sympathized. "Either the frame of the world was dissolving, or its maker was suffering."

The first drop of the cup in Gethsemane was like to destroy mortal life: its dregs were drained upon the cross. These portents marked the period when the internal gloom had deepened into the most dismal darkness: and the cry was extorted that God had forsaken him. Be not astonished at the darkened heavens; this was no wonder compared with the scene of Calvary. Be not astonished at the strange trembling of the earth; this was nothing compared with the transaction of that fatal day. That the Lord of Glory should suffer is the wonder.

How must the hearts of the leaders have throbbed, as they marked the waning light, and beheld the gaping crevices beneath their feet! What a check was then put to the blasphemy and taunt, that had before known no bounds! Instead of wagging their heads and reviling, the scorers trembled for themselves. Those, who had gone out to see the strange sight, smote upon their breasts and returned. Men refused to mourn for him; their countenances were not darkened; but the earth put on her weeds, and trembled for her lord; the sky veiled itself in black. Not only did the earth quake: the throne of God above was shaken. Angels were dumb with silence; and heaven was deserted. One scene drew the attention of all that had care for God, and were capable of thought. One scene will stand fresh as yesterday in the memory of saints and angels to all eternity—the scene of Calvary.

There is in the cross of Christ something more winning than all the fascinations of sin. It gives new light upon the character of God, and demonstrates his love to be of a quality not found on earth. Love is the most wonderful of all his perfections, and swallows up all his attributes, and becomes the governing impulse, and fills his whole nature. We cease to wonder at the immensity of his works; at the boundless expanse of space filled with the shining

proofs of his wisdom and power; at the equally boundless universe below us, revealed by the microscope, but full of joyous life; we cease to wonder at the mysteries of his incomprehensible being; and our souls are absorbed in the greater wonder of his love. See sin strike the Redeemer to the heart, and love it if you can. The cross shows its evil more clearly than any other demonstration; it alone can make us sick of sin forever. We are by this become dead unto sin; its seductions we no longer heed. It loses its iron grasp of our souls.

He wept. What had he to weep over? He was in himself infinitely and eternally happy. He wept for our sins, "that we might weep." He wept not only tears of grief; but tears of blood. He suffered. Ah! who could make him suffer? Where is the wretch to be found? Sinner, thou art the man. Sin wounds deeper than the soldier's nails and spear.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

ATONEMENT.

Atonement for human sin by the sufferings of the Son of God is the doctrine which distinguishes the religion of the Bible from all other religions. Of course this doctrine has then been prominent in all the ages; atonement by blood probably being the first revelation from heaven made after the fall of our first parents, and before their expulsion from Eden. This accounts for the universal prevalence of bloody sacrifices from the remotest antiquity; as derived from the immemorial traditions of the race. While the significance of the ceremony was early lost; yet the practice of sacrificial rites pervaded the world. The Bible furnishes the satisfactory explanation of their significance; this form of worship being retained after its meaning had lapsed from the memory of man.

With the selection of Israel as the chosen nation, this truth was made the central orb, about which all their institutions were arranged. The altar, down which an everlasting stream of new and living blood was pouring, and the most Holy place, in which the only offering was new and living blood, were the arcana of Judaism. The long succession of inspired prophets kept the subject alive ever, by the most vivid forecasts of the coming deliverer, who, in the process of time, would accomplish the great redemption by the shedding of his own blood. Ever this cardinal truth has been made prominent above all else; that a redemption by suffering and blood would in the fulness of time be made, by which the results following transgression would be remedied; and man be restored to the favor of an offended God. From the many passages enjoining an offering typical of the great atoning sacrifice, we select the following, as describing minutely and thoroughly the whole process required of the worshipper:

“And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying: If a soul sin, and commit a trespass against the Lord, and lie unto his neighbor in that which was delivered him to keep, or in fellowship, or in a thing taken away by violence, or hath deceived his neighbor; or have found that which was lost, and lieth concerning it, and sweareth falsely; in any of all these that a man doeth, sinning therein; then it shall be because he hath sinned, and is guilty, that he shall restore that which he took violently away, or the thing which he hath deceitfully gotten, or that which was delivered him to keep, or the lost thing which he found, or all that about which he has sworn falsely; he shall even restore it in the principal, and shall add the fifth part more thereto, and give it unto him to whom it appertaineth, in the day of his trespass offering. And he shall bring his trespass offering unto the Lord, a ram without blemish out of the flock, with thy estimation, for a trespass offering unto the priest; and the priest shall make an atonement for him before the Lord; and he shall be forgiven, for anything of all that he hath done, in trespassing therein.”—Lev. VI: 1-7.

The offender contemplated in this statute is a truly penitent man. He gives good evidence of this by his voluntary confession of his crime. The repetition of this law in Deut. contains an additional item, deciding to whom the money should be paid, in case of the decease of the injured party: showing that this law had reference to crimes long concealed, and voluntarily confessed. The law for the detected thief was different, requiring repayment of five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep. The man described in this enactment is guilty of having defrauded his neighbor long years ago; and though perhaps suspected at the time; yet, by dint of lying and swearing falsely, he has managed to allay suspicion, and to retain his standing in society, and his reputation as an honest man; until the injured neighbor has passed away. The growing burden upon his conscience has in the meantime become past endurance.

Worn with a secret, which has long been consuming his life, he at length makes full and voluntary confession of his sin, aggravated by reiterated falsehood and perjury. It is not necessary to say, that men will endure agonies,

before they will confess; and that guilty secrets are not divulged, until death unlocks the lips; and often are carried unrevealed to the grave. The mortification of discovery, and the consequent scorn of the world, and the vindictive hatred of the injured, are too terrible to be encountered; were there not a more formidable array of condemnation in the anticipated doom of the divine judgment.

This transgressor, urged by anguish of conscience, at length makes confession of his crime; and gives another evidence of true repentance, by full restitution to the injured party, or his heirs, or to the priest; in case that they cannot be found. He restores the principal and adds the fifth part more thereto; and gives it to him, to whom it appertaineth. He is thus correcting the wrong done to his fellow-man, as far as is possible. A man cannot be truly penitent, and retain in his possession that which of right belongs to his neighbor. The addition of a fifth part more to the original sum would be a sufficient increment among a people, who were not allowed to exact usury of one another. Zaccheus, in the freshness of his new obedience, restored four-fold like a convicted thief; nor could his conscience be quieted with less; though this law, which we are considering, was framed to meet such cases as his. In cases of restitution, the tendency is to a generous abundance; rather than a bare equivalent. Before God can be approached, the thief must disgorge freely, and beyond the bare amount due.

He, who makes humble confession and full reparation, from the impulse of his own convictions, gives satisfactory evidence of sincere and genuine repentance for the wrong, of which he has been guilty.

The offender described in this statute was then a sincere penitent; but was he forgiven in consideration of his repentance? Human law has no longer a claim against him; nor can it inflict a penalty upon him in anywise. He has made all right with his neighbor, and thus escapes liability at the hand of civil justice; but he has now an account to settle with God, at the bar of divine justice. The stain of sin is upon his soul; the law of God has been violated. One, who had been guilty of the greatest outrage upon his fellow-

man, said: "Against thee, even thee only have I sinned; and done this evil in thy sight." Wrong done to man is done against God, whose law is not advice, which a man may take or refuse as he may please. Advice is advice, which no one is under obligation to accept; but law is law, and is violated at peril.

The account with God can be settled with blood only. His forgiveness is not bestowed because the transgressor sincerely repents; but "the priest shall make an atonement for him; and it shall be forgiven him, for all that he has done sinning therein."

To pardon a transgressor in consideration of his sincere repentance is to abandon the law altogether. When an earthly executive issues a pardon to a criminal proved guilty beyond a doubt, if the evidence has been fairly taken and considered, he is setting aside the law and making it null and void; and doing more to demoralize society, than the guilty criminal has done.

How many regard the law of God as being as flexible as the laws of the country! which Christ declares to stand firmer than the heaven and the earth. He, who disobeys it, rushes upon the thick bosses of Jehovah's buckler; casts himself under the wheels of the car, on which the throne of the divine majesty rests; and stands a pronounced rebel against the Holy God, who issues no pardon of transgression, but on the ground of satisfaction to the stern and inflexible law.

The religion of the Bible has demanded the same compliances in all ages: repentance toward God and faith in an atoning Savior. Relaxation of its requirements has never been made, and is impossible. It is the same in all time. All the light to be gathered from the Old Testament on this subject of atonement, is to be found in the consideration of the several steps commanded for the making the required offering.

1. The animal designated for the altar was a lamb of a year old; not yet mature. It was the animal selected on account of its innocence, being thus a type of the future Redeemer. Unprovided with the weapons of aggression or means of escape, it relies on man for protection; and flees

to him for shelter more than any other of the brute creation. The dove has its sharp beak, the cow its formidable horns; but the lamb has only man for its defence. Hence it properly represents innocence.

And then it is unresisting. The bullock, on its way to the altar of God, often became furious at the smell of blood; and resisting with loud bellowings, had to be forced to the fatal spot; but the little lamb willingly followed its master to the bloody altar; and yielded up its life without resistance. This is true of no other animal than the lamb, which was thus a picture of him, who "was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep dumb before its shearers, so, opened he not his mouth."

But the chief reason for its selection was the tie that existed between it and its master. An affection for brutes is not unworthy of humanity. The horse and the dog are often regarded with evident love among the most cultivated nations of the day; they were both forbidden to the Israelite; and the lamb became the recipient of the attachment of a pastoral people, as might be expected.

The animal without blemish and without spot was a privileged inmate of the tent, the playmate of the children, delighting them with its gambols, and partaking with them of their cheer. Possessed of the most delicate auditory provision, it knew the voice of its master; and could never be deceived by any imitation of sound from a stranger; but recognizing his call at all times, bounded to the shepherd, whenever he approached. What a picture of pastoral life is presented in Nathan's parable to David! "The poor man had nothing save one little ewe lamb, which did eat of his meat, and drank of his cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter." No society for the suppression of cruelty to animals was needed among the Israelites; the law of Moses required the greatest kindness to the brutes. "Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk," "When thou findest a bird's nest by the way; thou mayest take unto thee the young; but thou shalt not take unto thee the dam," are instances. The Jew loved his little lamb exceptionally; and therefore God chose it for the animal of sacrifice.

Imagine now the scene at an atonement. Impelled by intolerable remorse, the offender has confessed a crime of long ago; and knowing that God, in order to its forgiveness, requires the sacrifice of a life, takes the perfect animal for a victim. He has to tear it away from the embraces of the children; and leads it off amid the weeping farewells of the family. No stain of guilt is upon the lamb; yet it is to die for sin not its own. An innocent being is to suffer in the stead of the guilty. The owner is saying to himself, I am the offender; God might justly require my life; but graciously accepts another life in the place of mine. This substitution became very evident as the ceremony progressed.

Next, the offender was required to confess his sin publicly; while his hand rested on the head of the lamb. All the particulars of the misdeed were honestly and truly recited: the opportunity, the temptation, the secrecy, the inward contest, the final determination, the crime, the subsequent falsehood, and the perjury. Every step was humbly and sorrowfully published: and during the whole of this confession, the hand was on the head of the victim. The little animal by no means threw off its master's hand, which had often fondled and fed it.

The penitent with many tears divulged his guilt, adopting the words of some devotional portion of the word of God: acknowledging that the sword of divine justice might properly cut him down; and that the fire unquenchable of the divine wrath might consume him; but praying that God would accept instead the life being offered. While the words were on his lips, [that God's justice might strike him, and his wrath, like fire consume him,] the knife of the priest struck the unresisting lamb; and it was prepared for the fire. Precisely what the man had confessed might befall himself, befell the lamb. The fire on the altar was the emblem of the eternal fire, having been kindled from heaven in the wilderness, and burning for centuries without extinction. Korah and his company perished for the crime of using other fire, than the fire of God.

Under the guise of this simple ceremony were veiled the great doctrines of imputation and substitution. The laying on of hands was understood to imply that in the act,

something was communicated from the principal to the recipient: as when the Holy Ghost was given in the laying on of hands, and as when Jacob blessed the sons of Joseph by laying on of hands. In this case the guilt in the sense of liability to punishment was considered as passing over from the transgressor to the victim: and the lamb, assuming the guilt of the crime, was treated as the offending party.

The actual criminality belongs ever to the culprit himself, and cannot be transferred. Under the administration of Jehovah, the liability to suffering and punishment can be shifted. The phraseology of the Bible is not that our sins were imputed to Christ: but that they were laid upon him: an expression evidently derived from this ceremony and equivalent to imputed. The lamb was regarded as a substitute for the criminal: and could it have spoken, might have said, my dear master I willingly die for thee and in thy stead: thy life is required, and I surrender mine in place of thine.

As its body quivered in the agonies of death, the transgressor could but feel: this fearful doom I had merited; but God accepts another life in place of the one I have forfeited. As its body was cast into the fire of the altar, the master could but feel, this doom was justly mine; but God has appointed another to endure it in my place. They knew as well as we, that the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sin; and that these offerings were but pictures of the great atoning offering to be made in the future. Probably no Jew ever went through this ceremony without tears; to do otherwise than weep seems quite impossible.

This whole ceremony in all its parts was an affecting representation of the work of Jesus Christ, cut off in his young manhood; slain by men; but offered and consumed in the fire of the divine wrath; and suffering for the sins of man imputed to him, or laid upon him, the sinless one. Such was the only service, by which God could be approached: the only worship he would receive.

It is contained in this delineation of the work of Christ; that he suffered the identical curse which man would have undergone; had the judgment fallen upon him. This is

the unquestionable truth. Our Lord was incapable of remorse, despair or selfish rage and fury, which the lost are represented as experiencing; but these are not the penalty of God's law; they are but its adjuncts and results. The dire penalty due to man for his sin, the curse of God Jesus endured: he drank the very cup prepared for us. The very sword, that should have smitten us, smote him; the consuming fire of God's vengeance kindled upon him.

This institution is as old as the fall of man, and came down from Eden. Cain rejected the bloody offering, and placed upon his altar his pyramid of grain, surrounded by clusters of the most luscious fruits, and adorned with flowers in wreaths, and crowns, and harps, and put no fire under. Abel also put no fire under his bloody sacrifice. God refused the offering of Cain: the fire fell from heaven upon Abel's. No confession of dependence, no acknowledgment of mercies received, and of gratitude due will God receive as acceptable worship. His worship consists in the humble acknowledgment of sin, and hope in the blood of a crucified Redeemer.

Jesus is called the lamb in the writings of Peter and Paul and John; and no less than twenty-seven times in the one book of Revelation. He is said to bear our sins, which can only mean, that he bore the punishment due to us for our sins; which is the sense of the phrase throughout the books of Moses. His death is called a sacrifice; and we are said to be saved by his blood-shedding and death. To this view agrees the otherwise inexplicable fact of his unparalleled mental suffering.

We learn the depth and intensity of those sufferings from the prodigies which attended his death. The sun had risen as usual, and shone with its ordinary vernal brightness. No eclipse was possible at the passover moon. The fury of men had done its work; and their victim had been hung amid unexampled insults upon the cross. For three hours taunt and mockery had swept over him like a tempest; but at its meridian height the sun lost its light; until the obscurity was probably like the gloom of a total eclipse; and a pall of mourning overspread the whole land: not from any intervening body cutting off its beams. No

natural cause existed, to which the effect could be ascribed. For three hours this darkness prevailed; as though the machinery of nature were dissolving; and it plainly suggested such a catastrophe.

At the instant of his loud cry and death, a groan came from the caverns of the quaking earth, than which was never sound more appalling; resulting from the simultaneous rending of the mighty ledges of rock around the city. This was no ordinary earthquake. Such frequently open fissures in the ground, and displace mighty rocks; but never rend them. A rock can be easily split along the lines of its natural seams; only a supernatural force can rend it.

Men groan and rend their garments in overwhelming grief. Such mourning to our Jesus was refused; but inanimate nature groaned; solid rocks were rent; and the guilty city quaked with a vibration, whose force was expended chiefly upon the temple. Its strong and heavy veil was torn from the top to the bottom; the doors of tombs were wrenched open; and the bones of saints moved on their stony beds.

Various notices have come down to us of supernatural omens connected with the destruction of the holy house: the diverse accounts are doubtless all founded on what occurred in this memorable hour. How must the hearts of the guilty perpetrators have beaten hard; as they marked the waning light! What a check was then put to the taunt and blasphemy, that had raged like a beating storm! The centurion in charge felt that these portents were connected with the death of the sinless one; as did those who had gone out to gaze; and returned, smiting on their breasts. Not only did the earth quake; it may be that the throne of God above was shaken; and that heaven was paralyzed with wonder. One scene will stand fresh as yesterday in the memory of saints and angels, to all eternity: the scene of Calvary.

The agony, which produced the death sweat in Gethsemane prevailed with an increased intensity during the hours of darkness; and at length ruptured the walls of the aching heart; and terminated the life. This horror of suffering is to us inexplicable; but on the theory of atonement for sin.

Angelic ministrations had been employed to reinforce the failing body, and to support it through the coming ordeal. In the few instances, in which a distant resemblance has been observed to this sweat of blood; death has immediately supervened. The Savior's life was prolonged; until he could say "it is finished."

Nature sympathizes with God only. When the soul of man is crushed with grief, the only material object which shows sympathy, is the body, over which it has the control, which trembles, weeps, and faints; feeling the disturbance of its fluids, and the throbbing of its vital organs. When Jesus suffered and died, universal nature responded in sympathy by signs unmistakable. The earth shuddered and groaned; and the sun covered its face. The pageant of gloom gave no impression unwarranted by the fact. The darkness that prevailed was an emblem of the deep anguish of his soul: the trembling earth and rending rocks appropriately designated the horrors of the deed then being enacted. They were no wonders in comparison. They were but minor and inconsiderable circumstances; the astounding fact was the death of the Son of God for sin imputed to the sinless. In these prodigies there was no exaggerated description. When did immaculate truth do anything for mere effect?

The cross throws a new light on the character of our God; and demonstrates the tenderness of his love. Love is shown to be the essence of his divinity, the impulsive power of his nature, the soul of his attributes, the true inwardness of his being. Mercy is love in the most soul-subduing form, the human soul can conceive. Wonder at the infinities of his nature, the immensity of his works, and at his illimitable presence ceases; the whole soul is absorbed in the greater wonder of his love. Did sin pursue Jesus to death, and strike him to the heart? He, who gives it place in his affections, is re-enacting the scene of Calvary.

As we gaze upon the scene of the crucifixion, the actors of that age vanish; the un-believing Jew and the cruel Roman fade from the view; there remain the cross, the nails, and the spear; the lonely sufferer monopolizes our attention. The mockery still rings; and it is our lips that

have mocked: it is ourselves that are arrayed against bleeding purity and love. The sight of him dying by our sin, yet loving us still, and praying: "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do," subdues our enmity, convicts us not only of sin; but also of righteousness: and of judgment: for a tribunal is immediately erected within us; and the decisions of the great day are pronounced. When we trust in him as our righteousness, our souls enter into a new life of hope and joy and zeal. Angels are confirmed in immutable obedience, and bound in the chains of undying love by the atoning death; and shall not we be affected by it to a responsive love: we, for whom his blood was shed?

From this ancient institution, we learn with what feelings we are to come to the cross of Christ: the same which brought the Jew to the temple and the altar of God. We are to approach with spontaneous and full confession of our sin, making to men all reparation in our power; with profound sorrow and shame on account of it; and with our lamb. If Jesus died for sinners, he died for us personally and as individuals; and we may call him our lamb, and lay our hands upon his head, in a true faith; that his blood avails for us personally. Be not afraid to approach; venture your hands upon his head; refuse not to believe and trust in him; for in so refusing, you grieve and dishonor him more than you have done, by all the accumulated sin of a long life.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A VIEW OF HIS SUFFERINGS.

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. 1 Cor. 15: 3.

Paul is stating the truth which was most prominent in his preaching. The primary and central fact was that "Christ died for our sins:" a fact which comprehended the whole gospel. He preached "Christ and him crucified." He not only so taught the churches; but his own soul so received Christ as the foundation of his hope, the comfort of his sorrows, and the centre of his thoughts. All the motives which aroused him, and which he presented to the churches to stimulate to zeal, to self-denial, to patient submission are drawn from the cross. It held in his mind such a place, that he might be said to know nothing else. This great truth, so abhorrent to all the prejudices of the Jew, so foolish in the estimation of the rationalistic Greek, he further states to have been according to the Scriptures of the Old Testament. It had been revealed more or less fully from the creation of the world, by verbal predictions, and by typical representation.

The types all prefigured a suffering Messiah. The offerings for sin had from the time of Abel been bloody sacrifices. It was a principle in the Levitical institution, that "without shedding of blood is no remission." Every offering for sin confessed was an offering of the blood and of the whole animal by fire. The fire was never extinct upon the altar, and the knife of the priest never dry through a day. The teaching of the holy rites was, that sin could be atoned by blood only; blood morning and evening, blood when individual penitents made confession, blood flowing like water at every great feast and special occasion. The altar ran incessantly with blood, like a wine press. If the

ceremonial of the temple was capable of teaching anything, it certainly indicated this great truth, that "without shedding of blood is no remission." Apprised as the offerers were of the inefficacy of the blood of bulls and of goats, they were directed to a great offering to be made in the future by the shedding of blood that should really atone. That men should, prior to their accomplishment, misinterpret minor circumstances connected with the types is not strange; but that they should fail to appreciate the great underlying principle of the ceremonial is truly wonderful.

So the verbal predictions of the coming Savior, while they contained the most glorious announcements of the majesty and glory of his kingdom, had quite plainly indicated his rejection and cruel sufferings. While the harp of prophecy had sounded in the most triumphant strains the grandeur and extent of his dominion; it had, in the very midst of its loftiest notes, dropped to a mysterious underplains of woe, and the accompaniment of a death dirge. The stone was to be "set at naught of the builders;" the Christ was to be "one whom the nation abhorreth;" whom the rulers treated as a slave; he was to be "despised and rejected, and cut off, but not for himself." His death for sin is graphically described by Isaiah; and the scene of his suffering circumstantially depicted in the twenty-second Psalm. But a veil was over the eyes of the readers.

The principal object of the types was to present him to view in his humiliation and sufferings. He was to be a man of no appearance, a meek and unresisting sufferer like the little lamb; but there were in the types intimations of his immense worth and importance also. They represented him as the Father's Isaac, the object of his whole affection; he was typified also by the high priest clothed in sacred robes, and the incumbent of the highest office in the nation. The Messiah was to be of no reputation and a man of sorrows, and at the same time the most exalted being in the universe. Jesus Christ is the maker of worlds; and yet a man, a man of no appearance. Worlds are scattered around his throne like glittering dust; yet to him their value, in comparison of a single soul, is nothing.

How strange that the great Creator, the infinite and ilimitable spirit, should take into inseparable connection with himself our poor humanity! There is nothing wonderful beside. Everything connected with the man Christ Jesus was wonderful, his miracles, his teachings; but nothing so wonderful as himself. The miracle was not so strange; as the mingled majesty and humility of the mysterious being, whose word accomplished it. The lustre of his teachings outshone the works; but the great object of admiration was himself. Methinks spectators turned away their eyes from the sheeted deed standing at the door of the open tomb, to scan the quiet majesty of the lord of life. A sight of him without a miracle was enough to agonize Pilate, and to convince the dying thief to his soul's eternal joy. That angels should sing at his birth is not the wonder, but that he should be born. The darkened heavens and trembling earth at his death were not a wonder: the wonder was that a being, possessed of power to control all things, should suffer at all. The wonder was the majesty, the patience, the love of the holy victim. Godhead was stamped upon his brow: holiness shone his features. Prophets, when unusually faithful, had excited the hatred of a few: Elijah was hated by Ahab and Jezebel; John the Baptist was hated by Herodias: Christ was hated by the world. The opposition, which the holiest prophets met, was nothing to that which rose against him. A clear and vivid revelation of the holiness of God is sometimes followed by an ebullition of angry opposition, as is often seen during a revival of religion, was terribly exhibited at the foot of Sinai, and more dreadfully still when Jesus moved among men.

I. In contemplating his suffering, it may be said, that there arose partly from the malice of Satan. While the world was at peace at the time of the advent, and in the posture of attention; angels good and bad never frequented it so much. More than twelve legions were beholding the strange scene of the arrest at the gate of Gethsemane, eager to look into these things. Satan was permitted to exercise more power than ever before on earth, with full liberty to assault the holy sufferer by temptation. He was

unchained, that the ages might see Emmanuel's victory over him. A contest was in progress between the seed of the woman, and the old serpent the devil, who was to be permitted to bruise his heel, at the cost of the crushing of his own head. Of course this spiritual conflict did not come within the scope of human observation; but never were the powers of evil more active: it was "their hour, and the power of darkness."

The temptations of the evil one are called fiery darts from the arrows with ignited combustibles attached which were used in order to burn the intrenchments of enemies. These satanic suggestions are shot like darts; and stick rankling and inflaming our susceptible souls; though we may at first abhor them. Shot out against Christ, they found nothing capable of being inflamed; they did not even stick. But what humiliation for him to be obliged to listen to the foul whispers of the enemy! "He suffered being tempted." With what energy was it alleged by the tempter, that men spurned his interference on their behalf; that they desired no reconciliation with their offended maker; that they were ready to murder the messenger of peace; and desired no lighter doom than devils; that undue partiality was being shown for men, who were as ungrateful and unworthy as the lost angels themselves; that all who have sinned should be left to perish together!

And then Satan assailed the Lord Jesus by the hands of men. He has often raged against the church, and endeavored by fire and sword to destroy the last one called by the name of Jesus. With tireless zeal he has dictated persecutions, until he has almost succeeded in quenching the fire of godliness in seas of blood. And if he has taken any respite, it has been only to prepare fouler devices; and under the assumed garb of a friend, to steal into the inclosure of God's people, and strangle reviving Christianity if possible in its very cradle.

But all his rage against the church has been nothing compared with what it was against the holy son of God. He then came down with great power and fell like lightning from heaven. The hatred of the Jewish people against him was satanic rather than human. The world is aston-

ished at its vehemence. There was never the like spectacle on earth. The human bosom may have swelled with equal rage in isolated cases: but how came it to pass that his chosen friends were "offended because of him," that none were found to stand by him; that pity seemed extinct in his oppressors; and the rejection of his own people was so unrelenting? The bloody duelist will feel his anger mitigated at once by the sight of his bleeding victim; the murderer regrets his act the next instant; but the hatred of Jesus knew no compassion; was incapable of a tear; grew more dreadful to the last. Ah! there was the malice of hell united with the rage of men. My God! was it not enough for men to hate? Why were the raging fiends from the dark world of despair at liberty to heap unmitigated torment upon him? He was made to endure all that a sensitive nature could endure; and it was for us. It may be that he might have atoned had the inward temptations been spared; but he chose to endure every anguish possible to humanity.

II. His suffering came partly from the treatment of men. Greater were never inflicted upon the vilest of the vile. "His visage was more marred than any man's; and his form more than the sons of men." It is not an exaggerated statement of man, but the solemn declaration of inspiration; that the foulest crimes, and the most detestable character never brought down upon a guilty head anything like the treatment that Jesus experienced; and all because he was holy. The nation could endure impious Manesseh; they could cordially salute adulterous Herod; they could overlook the crimes of Barabbas; they could shake hands with the traitor Judas; but the holy Jesus they hated. They had no abhorrence of sin; they could endure the perpetrators of the vilest crimes. Oh! Jesus of Nazareth hadst thou but been a sinner, the world had had nothing against thee. The indignities which were heaped upon him in the council chamber, came not from ruffians of the lower class. The senators could not wait until he was legally condemned, before they mocked. At first a servant of the high priest ventured to strike him; and when it became plain, that such a liberty could be taken with

impunity, the aged and venerable priests and elders joined with the servants, and emulated their vulgar and coarse cruelty. All decorum was forgotten; they coolly stood before him, and spat upon him as long as they could discharge the foulness of their throats into his face.

This was no excitement of sudden anger; but the deliberate expression of a scorn and hatred that had been long growing, and was too big for words. When all this failed to discompose him, they could not refrain from buffeting him, covering his face and saying: "Prophesy unto us, thou Christ, who is he that smote thee?" Was ever such a scene enacted in the highest court of a civilized people and by the judges themselves?"

Herod with his men of war set him at naught. It is astonishing that the prince should permit such conduct in his presence; and utterly past wonder that he should himself set the example, and encourage a treatment so unbefitting royalty. He evidently felt the scorpion sting in his own bosom; and was gratifying personal resentment. This scene demonstrates, that the scorn of the son of God was not confined to individuals, or to classes, but was general.

Pilate, free from Jewish antipathies, and therefore an impartial judge, seems to have had a keener intuition, and more conscience than Herod and the council. He did not suppose him to be a pretender; he knew him to be innocent of wrong, and anything but a disturber. Yet Pilate scourged his delicate and supersensitive prisoner with the fearful Roman scourge, and condemned him to die a capital death, all the while protesting: "I find in him no fault at all." He did it indeed reluctantly, and with the greatest misgivings; but he delivered him to be crucified against the warnings of heaven.

The soldiers in the hall of Pilate followed the example set by Herod; and arrayed him in a royal robe, and put a crown upon his head, a crown of thorns; and a sceptre in his hand, a sceptre of reed; and then went through the farce of swearing allegiance to him on the bended knee. It was more than mockery; for they smote in the thorns upon his brow, until he was a king anointed with blood.

Vain was the effort to overcome him by shame, or to soil the incomparable majesty of his countenance.

Crucifixion was a Roman punishment; but a Roman was never suffered to undergo it. It was certainly invented in the most barbarous age. It comprised more of torture and ignominy than any other mode of execution. The first method of its infliction was by means of a tree, having two lateral branches of the proper spread and angle, to which the miserable victim was attached by means of sufficiently large iron spikes driven through the extended hands and feet. The less the injury to these most sensitive parts, the more protracted the agony of dissolution. No vigorous man can keep his arms thus elevated for more than a very few minutes, without becoming sensible of the most exhausting fatigue in the attempt. Moses, on the day of the conflict with Amalek, could not keep a single arm stretched out and upward toward heaven. Aaron and Hur seated him upon a stone, and by their own main strength sustained the ever drooping hand, which held the rod of God pointed towards the sky.

When both arms are thus outstretched, and confined by spikes in this unnatural extension, the sufferer soon begins to feel from this one source alone an unutterable weariness. When in addition the feet are pinioned to the tree by irons which pierce their tender substance through, these are the most painful wounds that a human body can receive: as was abundantly proved by the experience of those who in the war were shot through the foot. The necessity of supporting the whole weight upon them nevertheless, the unavoidable and ever increasing laceration of the sensitive tissues of the feet, produce an agony which grows and grows with every hour to be well nigh insupportable. To this ever increasing torment is to be added the impossibility of any change of position. The slightest change would be a rest; but not one instant of rest was attainable by any shifting of the weight of the body. Sufferers on downy couches complain of weariness, and are relieved by change. To the crucified, no relief, no interval without pain existed.

Another cause of terrible anguish was an insatiable thirst. A gunshot wound is followed instantly by a fierce thirst, which, if not gratified, increases to a perfect rage. As the fever rises, which immediately ensues, the dying soldier drags his helpless carcass toward the cooling stream; and suffers more from the agonizing thirst, than from the most serious wound. Sailors, delivered from ocean wrecks, tell fearful tales of the agonies of thirst. A wounded man, to whom water is denied, suffers ten-fold.

These causes combined make death by crucifixion the most fearful death, that human malignity ever devised. The Romans adopted it at once as their mode of capital punishment; it so perfectly suited the cruelty of their national character. Where criminals were enduring this form of death, the air was full of the most piteous calls for water, the most fearful curses and imprecations, and prayers for death outright. Roman cruelty heard them all unmoved. One of their best and greatest men at about this very time, said of this form of execution: "It should be absent from the eyes, the ears, the thoughts of men," implying that he himself was haunted by what he had seen and heard, and would forget if he could.

This death by the cross the sinless Redeemer was made to endure, aggravated to the extremest degree. No torment that could be invented, but was added. It could be made a rack, by which nearly all the bones of the body could be dislocated; as well as an instrument of execution. The frame of the sufferer could be made almost like the broken bread of the sacrament, by the fierce violence of its adjustment. The inspired statement respecting it in the twenty-second Psalm, is: "All my bones are out of joint. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me." The beholder could almost count the bones in the shrunken and collapsed skeleton hanging in view.

And then while the malefactors were left to die unmolested, and even some provision was made for their thirst of an alleviating potion, there was not in a single bosom an emotion of compassion for the sinless one. All that passed by wagged their heads and reviled him. Highway robbery and murder aroused no indignation, compared

with what was felt against Christ. He was the object of the concentrated mockery and insult of the world. There was pity for the thieves; but only derision for Jesus. The crowd marked the central figure alone, like a circle of hissing serpents surrounding a fated victim, each anxious to deliver the final stroke. Their hatred and scorn grew by exercise, and indulgence, and became more dire and dreadful to the last.

Knowing how hopeless any appeal to their compassion would be, the Redeemer endured the awful thirst of crucifixion; but because it had been predicted, he begged for relief, saying: "I thirst." Anticipating the inevitable supplication, gall had been provided, and mingled with vinegar was raised to his fevered lips. How tenderly burning lips are wetted by the hand of affection; while the cooling draught is administered to help the sufferer in his agony! but no sympathy moved for Jesus.

In the midst of sufferings, indescribable because unfathomable, he exclaimed: "*Eli! Eli! lama sabachthani;*" and the bystanders were ready to make a cruel jest of it. Another word of prophecy had said: "I looked for comforters; and there were none; and for some to take pity; but I found none." So terrible was the vengeance of that assembled crowd; that his friends were overborne by it. They were not only afraid and ashamed to own connection with him; but they even mused in their hearts, whether he could be the son of God, and be left to the horror of such a fate.

It is hard to die among friends, kindly watched and nursed and cared for. It is hard to die on the block or gallows, even with the consolation that some condole and weep: but such was not the death of Jesus Christ. He was forsaken by those he loved; and the vengeance of hell could not add another drop to the cup of bitterness, which he was made to drink. It was in the eternal counsels of the most high, that he should suffer thus alone. It was too honorable a place for any of his disciples to occupy beside him on the summit of Calvary. He stood alone before the burning throne, when he became our surety; and he must stand alone, when he paid the debt to divine

justice. No created being can be admitted, where he can even seem to share the smallest portion of the glory, which belongs to our Emmanuel.

Terrible as the pains of such a death must have been, sufferings of another kind still must have been required in order to satisfy the demands of the law, which expends the full force of its retribution upon the soul, atoning sufferings are inflicted by the hand of God directly, rather than through the agency of men. Jesus was permitted to fall into the hands of men also; that they might display their real character in their treatment of him; and that sin might exhibit its "exceeding sinfulness." The sufferings of the Redeemer at the hands of men were more grievous to endure than all the malice and rage of the pit: ingratitude "worse than serpent's tooth" gave them their edge and sting. None can be astonished that Satan raged against him; but though apprised of the madness and desperation of sin, who can help being amazed at the pitiless opposition of men to the holy Son of God?

III. Let attention be directed to his inward agonies, though it seem almost a profanation to discuss them; and it will be readily confessed; that here are seen the traces of sufferings inflicted by God himself directly. These were the sufferings which destroyed his life: Abraham's own hand must slay his son. What we have previously recited, a mere man, sustained by divine help, might possibly be able to sustain; and in cases men have endured something of the same, though many degrees lighter than what came upon the sinless one. If God through a glass darkly shine upon the soul, torments cannot check the song of triumph, or interrupt the smile of joy. Vain have been proved the rack of the inquisition, and the fires of the stake. The spirit that sustained martyrs rested on him in thousand-fold measure. A strength more than human was in him, and a composure stable as the eternal throne. The curse of Almighty God carries with it what is far worse than bodily pain. Accordingly traces are visible, in his last hours of sufferings, unintelligible to us, and unaccountable except on the admission, that "HE hath put him to grief." HE hath "made his soul an offering for sin."

We have before seen him enduring the temptations of Satan, suffering the contradiction of sinners, moved with sympathy over the sorrows of the sufferers, till "himself took our infirmities, and carried our sorrows;" we have seen him weeping with those that wept, and over those who did not weep: and as far as human sympathy is concerned, we can understand his emotions. But in his whole life we do not discern anything like what he endured mentally through the last days. And so it is expressly declared, that he atoned by his death, that he was made a curse when he hung upon the tree. All the griefs of his previous life are not accounted of, or hardly considered worthy of mention in comparison with those appalling sorrows, which came upon him only at the last. And these defy our efforts to understand, or to disclose their nature.

Of one thing we are well assured; it is out of the power of man to torment the holy soul, even of a mere martyr, or apostle. Grief, the twin brother of sin, was not rooted in his soul, as it is inseparably entwined with a sinful nature: and it was not possible for human or satanic influence to shroud that holy and immovable being in gloom, or overcome him with agony. We learn from Gethsemane that his agony had no origin from, or connection with physical suffering. Here was penal sorrow, of which we know almost nothing. "The chastisement of our peace was upon him." We have experienced nothing but mercy at the hand of God. If we have been afflicted, afflictions have been our greatest mercies. God's judgments we have not known: they have not come within thousands of years of us. We can only form some feeble imagination of what penal sorrow is: there was no occasion for remorse in the holy victim. He could never feel the gnawings of the worm that never dies. Like a beam of sacred light which, though it shine upon the foulest corruption and disease, is uncontaminated and uncontaminable; so he was immaculate purity itself, and could never feel that which lends death its sting.

Could we have stood with the disciples within the gate of Gethsemane, we should have heard the voice that stilled the raging sea with a word, and opened the tomb, praying:

but it is the voice of a dying man. There was danger, that the shock of sudden anguish might rupture the walls of the heart: a result that actually followed on the day of the crucifixion, the following day. He is praying that if it be possible the cup might pass. If it be possible for God to save sinners at any less sacrifice, if it be possible for the holy law to relax its grasp, or be modified in any degree, and God's honor be saved, and at the same time the salvation of sinners be secured; that the cup might pass. He prayed with agonies, and tears, and blood. In vain do we search the records of time for anything to compare with the phenomena of that hour. Remorse and despair never produced such effects upon a feeble mortal. His body required miraculous support; therefore we see no faintings or insensibility during the hours of the crucifixion. But if the first taste of the cup was so dreadful, what must have been its horrors, when nature shuddered, earth's caverns groaned and the lamp of day burned dim and deathly! Had the whole race of mortals gone down in a moment to the sides of the pit, the sun had not lost its lustre; and earth and sun would have held on their wonted course, and have ascribed new glory to their maker's name. In vain is the attempt to imagine or describe; but it is beyond a doubt, that Jesus suffered at the hand of God.

There was evident in his closing hours a horror of grief, that rose like a flood, till his whole soul was engulfed by it. It was all mysterious. Nothing in the past could sting him with mortal agony; in the future there was overpowering glory only; his humanity was free from all the accompaniments of sin; yet he suffered. Awful proofs attest the reality of an anguish exceeding conception, and defying explanation, except such as the word of God gives, that "HE WAS WOUNDED FOR OUR TRANSGRESSIONS; HE WAS BRUISED FOR OUR INIQUITIES; AND THE CHASTISEMENT OF OUR PEACE WAS UPON HIM." Doubtless the intensity of his suffering was as much concealed, and out of view, as were his omnipotence and omniscience. But a glimpse only of his boundless power was afforded, sufficient to demonstrate his high endowment: only the A, B, C of his all comprehensive knowledge came within our observation, just sufficient to demonstrate its

illimitable boundlessness; we have proof of his possession of these divine attributes; and that is all. So the veil was so far withdrawn that we can see that he suffered; but the full extent of that suffering we can never fathom. Behind the veil there was far more unseen than was revealed. His bloody sweat and dying agony as little show the deep intensity of his sorrows, and their fearful extent; as his works fail to reveal his boundless reserve power. Yonder sun has seen a whole generation descend to hell in a day, but it shone on: when Jesus died, its light was dimmed. The earth has often quaked; when Jesus died, the dead in their graves felt it, and the dry bones moved. Old death trembled on his throne, as doomed to defeat. Nature never thus responded to man.

These portents show that in his last hours Christ was engulfed in an ocean of woe, whose distant roaring alone we can hear. Its lashing surges do not beat within the purview of human observation. Far more was perhaps concealed than was revealed. As when the cities of the plain were destroyed, Abraham beheld afar off the smoke as of a distant furnace; so we discover the certain indications of a storm of wrath, such as has never been experienced in a world of mercy. We have never tasted a drop of the cup which the Savior drained. We cease to wonder that he noticed not the insults of enemies. Perhaps bodily pain was almost unheeded in the dire, engrossing agonies of a soul "making an end of sins, and bringing in an everlasting righteousness."

These were the sufferings which atoned. God is the avenger of sin, laying our sins upon the head of the innocent lamb. Had it not been for our sins, the fiends of hell might have raged; but would not have been loosed against him. Had it not been for our sins, God would never have said to the sword of justice sleeping in its scabbard: "Awake, O sword, against the man that is my fellow; smite the shepherd." The spotless victim would never have been made to feel the torment due to sin. Man is the guilty cause of all. Let not the retribution come on us, seeing that there is forgiveness with God. Merciful Creator, let not thy wrath "beat upon our naked souls in one eternal storm!"

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE SUM OF THE JEWISH TYPES.

The tabernacle of the congregation was not a place of assembly for Israel, as the name would naturally suggest, but the tent of meeting between God and man. Therein it was shown on what conditions the presence and favor of God, withdrawn from the world on account of human sin, could be regained. All the Jewish types cluster about the holy of holies. In it were the arcana of Judaism, its whole mystery. The solution of the great problem of man's possible communion with his maker was to be found there: the only light from heaven upon the subject of greatest interest to the race, shone there. A great advance over all previous knowledge of the way of approach to a reconciled God was made by its arrangements, and required services: yet the similarity between its appointment and God's discovery of himself at Eden after the original transgression was marked. The attendant cherubim in both cases, the waving sword of fire forbidding approach in one case, and exclusion by statute on peril of death in the other, and propitiation by blood in both, demonstrate identity of administration.

The possession of the oracle conferred upon the Jew a distinction above all the inhabitants of the earth, sufficient to justify his extravagant sense of superiority; had it not been connected with such contempt for others. And the destruction of the ark of the covenant in the conflagration of the holy house by the Chaldeans was a far greater loss than the overthrow and ruin of their city, and the captivity of their people. The loss was irreparable, and was never repaired. The second temple hence was destitute of the ark and its contents, the Shechinah, and the lineal succession of the sons of Aaron; and its only "glory" was

that it was trodden by the son of God in mortal flesh, who took possession of it in the name of the eternal Father, and rescued it for a brief time from the desecration authorized by the high priest then in office.

1. In considering the types and their interpretation, the first great fact impressed by the arrangements of the tabernacle, is the uncleanness of human nature in the sight of God. No one of the favored nation was admitted within the holy walls. A very few of the priests, succeeding according to their courses, and selected by lot, entered the outer room to perform the three or four services necessary to its proper regulation. One man only, a lineal descendant of Aaron, could enter the inner room; and he but once in the year, and then but for a very brief space. The exclusion of the people was general and everlasting; and on the ground of their unfitness for the presence of a holy God. Indeed on the day of the annual atonement the high priest was required to make atonement for the holy place, as defiled by the entry into it of the anointed priests; and for the altar of burnt offering; because their impure hands had been upon it in the discharge of their enjoined service. The unlooked for presence of a venomous reptile in a family residence would not be felt to be more a pollution of the house, and the very air in it also, than was the presence of a human being, anointed and purified though he were, in the temple of the holy, holy, holy Jehovah. This exclusion was not enforced because of any enormities of which they had been guilty; but because of that original corruption of nature, which we have all inherited from Adam; which like a poison in the blood infects the whole moral constitution, and reveals itself in the wounds and bruises and putrefying sores of iniquity, which have not been "closed, nor bound up, nor mollified with ointment." As cancer or consumption or hydrophobia may be in our veins though latent; so the very virus of perdition is in our souls; if its presence is not suspected by ourselves, or indicated to others. So men were excluded from the house in which God's presence was, as moral lepers shut out from the uninfected. Such is the decision of the Most High respecting all the family of man; that their nature is so perverted

and vitiated by sin; that without a radical change they can never enter the pure world of which the sanctuary was the type. Into that heaven "nothing shall by any means enter that defileth, or worketh abomination, or maketh a lie:" therefore they were shut out from the earthly temple.

It is impossible to devise any more impressive method of declaring the boundless disparity and distance between God and sinners. After the gross idolatry at the foot of Sinai, the tabernacle, which had hitherto been in the midst of the camp, was withdrawn, and located without, and at a distance; indicating more strongly God's separation; by removing his dwelling place from their midst. His remotest connection with evil is the most impossible of all impossibilities. The bare thought of such conjunction is the gravest insult that can be offered to Jehovah: no opposites are so incompatible. Consuming fire and chaff can as easily coexist. All the dispositions of the tabernacle were so framed as to impress this, and keep it ever before the minds of the worshippers. Sinless angels, overwhelmed with awe by the contemplation of the dazzling purity of infinite holiness, cover their faces with their wings; as men shade their eyes before the white heat of the furnace, or the midday brightness of the summer sun, unable to bear the view. "The heavens are unclean in his sight."

2. Another fact shown by the arrangements of the tabernacle is the unapproachable sacredness of God's presence. The building was divided into two apartments; as was the temple afterwards, constructed of twice its dimensions. These two rooms represented earth and heaven, separated by the veil of flesh and blood. This veil is all that hides God, and the invisible world from present view. The furniture of the holy place consisted of the seven-branched lamp, the table of shew-bread, and the golden altar of incense, all which our Lord claimed to be symbols of himself as the light of the world, the bread of life, and the altar sanctifying our prayers, which are to be offered through him, and thus rendered acceptable to God. Into this room the priests could enter, but not at their own will; but only in order when duly commissioned and selected by lot, which to them was a direct call from heaven.

The other apartment was closed against the race. It contained only the ark of the covenant, which was a chest of Acacia wood forty-five inches in length and twenty-seven in breadth and height. Within were the two tables of stone written by the finger^m of God. This autograph of Jehovah was covered from view by a golden lid. The ark itself was overlaid with gold having a rim or crown projecting above the wood, which rim received and retained the massive golden lid, which if of the thickness of one-half inch, and it could not well be less, was of the value of more than fifty thousand dollars. Over this and still within the rim was laid a covering of rams' skins dyed red. The law was thus covered. The word for propitiation in Hebrew means a covering, and the word to forgive is to cover. On each end of the lid stood a cherub with wings outstretched, and intently gazing inward toward the sprinkled blood, which Peter explains as teaching: "into which things the angels desire to look." The ends of the staves by which it was carried were seen without the veil; in order that the priest entering into the thick darkness in which God dwells, might be apprized of the exact location of the ark, on whose lid called the mercy seat the blood was to be sprinkled. The Lord visibly occupied this mercy seat as his throne by a pillar of cloud resting upon it. Lev. 16:2. This inner room received no light from without; but its illumination was from the mysterious pillar above the ark. The heavenly city, the holy of holies of the universe "has no need of the sun nor of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of the Lord did lighten it, and the lamb is the light thereof." "The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal." Into this most holy place only the son of Aaron in direct lineal descent could enter after consecration, and compliance with the required purifications. His office was for one day in the year, and on that day only was the wholesacred edifice in use. The great entry typified by this would occur but once in the ages, the great actor would be solitary in his function; and would be everliving, as the succession had no vacancy. This most holy place derived its sacredness from the tables of God's writing; the ark, simply a wooden box,

had of itself no sanctity whatever. The words of the ten commandments were the only words pronounced by God himself in state to Israel, amid the terrifying accompaniments of the day, and the only writing of his hand. When this law was given, the Mount Sinai, which, if properly located by modern explorers, rises perpendicularly from the plain, and "might be touched," was sacred from all approach. Even the senseless beast, which might by accident run against it, was to be stoned or thrust through with a dart. This mountain was the first holy of holies; and when these tables were deposited in the ark, the inviolable sanctity of the holy mountain at once attached to it; and the restrictions of Sinai at once guarded the holy of holies; its sacredness due wholly to the presence of the tables of the law.

When this ark had at one time been taken by the enemies, they were unable to retain the dangerous and destructive trophy. Placed in the house of Dagon, their god, it overthrew the idol, shattering him the second night to the stump. The cities, in which it was successively deposited, were afflicted with one of the most distressing maladies incident to humanity; until they were forced to restore it. It was placed upon a new cart, never before used, and left to the instinct of the cattle attached. The young heifers, deaf to the cries of their appealing offspring, took the direct road to the nearest city of the land of Israel; and without a driver delivered it at Bethshemesh, where immense crowds soon gathered to receive it.

Some were hardy enough to open the sacred chest, and look upon the hidden tables; and in consequence fifty thousand and three score and ten were smitten, and died before the Lord. Removed to the house of a Levite in the immediate vicinity, it remained until David proposed to remove it to his own capital city, years after. When he went, with all the chosen men of Israel, to fetch it, it was again placed upon a new cart, which the Levite's two sons undertook to drive. When, owing to the roughness of the road, the ark was shaken by the oxen, Uzzah put forth his hand to steady it, he paid the penalty with his life upon the spot; and it was taken no farther; but placed in the house of another Levite immediately neighboring, David fearing to

bring it up to his own city. "Who can stand before this holy Lord God?" was the comment of every one; even the high priest could enter to its presence at the prescribed time only, "that he die not." No more startling lesson could be given enforcing its fearful sanctity, and the stern and rigid character of the law written on the tables.

Down the ages God called the attention of the people to this law by the most formidable demonstration of its obligation. It operates by a curse upon every soul lacking conformity in the slightest degree with its requirements. It shows no tolerance, no patience, no long-suffering; its condemnation is speedy and instantaneous; its retribution is a vengeance; and in its judgment it is sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit. The fearful circumstances attending its delivery were in harmony with its spirit, and revealed its authority; and lightnings and thunderings that might befit the last day, emphasized its prohibitions. The exclusion of mortals from the presence of these tables was enforced by unparalleled judgments visited instantly upon intruders: into the presence of the God of Sinai who would dare adventure?

The holy of holies, shut thus against the people, was entered by their representative solely. The priest "was ordained for men in things pertaining to God." There has never been but one real priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the Jewish priests were types: and the chief of their order combined in himself and his office a full figure and picture of the one only real priest of God. The long succession of the sons of Aaron typified his eternal office. On the annual day set apart for the entry, the priest was clothed in the holy garments made according to the pattern shown to Moses in the mount, the keeping of which was a matter of national importance: and when, in after ages, the Romans took them into their own guardianship, as a security for the good behavior of the people; by so doing they added to the grievances which led to the final war. One of these garments was a breast-plate set with twelve jewels, inscribed with the names of the twelve tribes, which he represented; denoting, that on the living heart of our Jesus the names of those who trust in him are engraved

in indelible traces, and that he so identifies himself with them, that to the eye of God they are one. An inscription in letters of gold, "Holiness to the Lord," shone upon his forehead. This priest, the highest official in the nation as God organized it, if true to his duty and his God, executed an office superior to that of king, of more sympathetic quality, of far greater accessibleness, and not subject to the temptations incident to royalty.

The tabernacle system kept ever prominent the great fact, that none could come into the presence of the holy Jehovah in his own name and person; and that all transactions on our behalf in his court, must be effected for us by an advocate and representative. A flaming sword turning every way barred the approach of sinners. The descriptions of the throne of God are apparently drawn from the burning mount. "Clouds and darkness, thunders and lightnings and voices, and trumpet are concomitants."

3. The first act required of the priest on the day of atonement, was to wash his whole body with water at the laver: and to clothe himself in the holy garments. A bullock had been provided on whose head he next laid his hands thus "putting his sins" upon the head of the victim; and when the bullock was killed as a sin bearer, he caught its blood *i. e.* its life in a shallow basin of gold; and before it was coagulated, while yet "new and living," he hurried with it within the veil; taking along a censer, on which burning coals from the altar had been previously placed, upon which he cast a handful of sweet incense beaten small. Standing before the ark just discovered by the glow of the coals, amid a cloud of ascending incense, he took of the warm blood in his fingers, and sprinkled it upon the mercy seat, once across and seven times lengthwise of the ark. The sprinkled blood fell between the wondering cherubim, and immediately under the pillar of cloud, which became a pillar of light and fire, if the offering were accepted. With his offering thus favorably received, he was now qualified to make atonement for the people; and immediately addressed himself to the ceremony, which was the fullest representation of the work of the future Christ that Judaism possessed.

To make the picture of his redeeming work perfect, three representative parties were required. Two goats were brought for a sin offering, the two constituting a single offering; each delineating a part of the atoning work, while the priest himself enacted another part of the same. Lots were first cast upon the goats to determine which should be the victim. When it was slaughtered, the priest caught its blood as it fell; and taking a censer replenished with fresh coals from the altar, on which he cast a handful of sweet incense beaten small, he hastened within the veil. In this part of the ceremony the shedding of the blood of Jesus was shadowed. The blood and the ascending incense set forth the dying and interceding Savior praying for all men: "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do." The other goat, with "the sins of the people upon its head" by the imposition of hands and confession, was sent away into the wilderness out of the sight of man, and there released; signifying that Jesus at death should go away out of sight of men bearing their sins. At this point, the priest took up the thread of representation, to show where the mediator would go. Passing through the veil separating the holy from the most holy place, the visible from the invisible, he showed that Christ, through the rent veil of flesh and blood, should enter into the presence of God, the unseen sanctuary; not "with blood of others:" and when the righteous law demanded the blood of transgressors, should have his own most precious blood to show as a substitute for man's, and "a propitiation for the sins of the world."

Standing again before the ark, he took of the living blood with his fingers, and sprinkled it still warm upon the mercy seat; once across, and seven times lengthwise of the ark; and before the mysterious pillar. During the ceremonies of the day, this whole function was performed by the priest without assistance; he was solitary in the whole work. Indeed everyone was forbidden by express statute to be near, when he entered within the veil. The people retired and stood afar off, praying and confessing their sins; it was a time of suspense and dread. The worshippers waited with bated breath the return of the

priest, who officiated at the peril of his life, if any informality occurred. And then they felt suspense on their own account; it being uncertain if the propitiation would be effectual for them, and what communications might be returned; for Jehovah held communion from the pillar through the priest. If the offerings were accepted, the most holy place became luminous from the supernatural light of the heavenly world; and its "sun shall not go down by day, and there shall be no night there."

Only a thin veil hides God from our sight; and through this rent by violence our Lord passed into the very court of his presence. His entry took place in the most solemn hour of the world's history. The unclouded sun at mid-day refused its light; and he entered amid darkened heavens, a quaking earth, opening graves, rending rocks, and angels mute with wonder approaching consternation. He transacted in heaven just what was represented in the holy of holies on earth. God's throne stood like the storm-clad Sinai, invested with eternal terrors, its central fire rising amid threatening clouds uttering their curses like thunders; while between their rifts, flashes revealed the lightning, ready to avenge the insulted honor of the great law. The sprinkled blood brought an entire change over the whole scene; the thunders died, the clouds scattered, the fire was quenched; and on the summit now visible, the seat of the eternal throne became a cross; and over all circled the bow of peace and good will, emerald chiefly in color; and from the brightness came a voice: "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do." "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "And I heard the voice of many elders round about the throne and the beasts and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice: "worthy is the lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them heard, saying: Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth on

the throne, and unto the lamb forever and ever. And the four beasts said, Amen; and the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth forever and ever."

This atonement of Christ is demanded by the law if any are to be saved, and is made to the law, and is a satisfaction of the law. It is not a mere exhibition on the part of God, a show devised in order to make an impression on angels and men; but its design was to reconcile God to the forgiveness of sins, and to make it safe and honorable for him to pass by transgressions. It was a legal proceeding whose effect terminates not so much on creatures, as upon the changeless Jehovah himself. The whole temple service was so arranged as to show the majesty and unchangeableness of the law, as well as the possibility and reality of atonement. God exists according to a necessity of nature; he is what he is by the same necessity; and the law stands by the same identical necessity. Right and wrong are such, independently of the will of God. The distinction between moral precepts and positive enactments would not exist, if his will alone clothed a statute with essential and unchangeable authority. His will could never impart to circumcision an obligation founded in nature, because it is itself contrary to nature. The commands of the moral law, on the contrary, are based upon the eternal fitness of things; and, with reverence be it spoken, are beyond the power of Jehovah to change or to modify. His own nature is conformed to them, and herein lies his supreme excellency; he is not an arbitrary being, he is a holy being. The law is dearer to him than the happiness of all the creatures that he has ever made. Being the expression of his own moral attributes, to surrender it would be to divorce those attributes.

His law is so perfect that the least variation destroys it altogether. It has such a unity, that to break one command is to violate the whole: to surrender one jot is to surrender the whole. "If a man keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." And if the law-giver fail to enforce it in one case, he abandons it altogether. The least change is from infinite perfection to

sin. Seated as Jehovah is on the throne of the universe, with the obligation resting on him to govern, to pass by an offence would be as heinous, as it was in the first place to commit it. A jury, a judge or a governor, that would overlook a plain violation of law, would be perhaps more guilty than the perpetrator of the crime himself. They inflict a far greater injury upon society.

Better far imperfect laws uniformly and rigidly enforced, than the wisest code existing only on paper. The first deviation by Jehovah from the line of absolute rectitude would be just what the first transgression by man his subject was, an entire dereliction of right. If perfection is to be maintained, a variation of a hair's breadth from the straight line of right can never take place.

Civil rulers throughout Christendom have had great hesitation about the pardon of crimes. Many a man has perished on the scaffold, whom the government would have spared if any expedient could have been devised, by which its own honor could have been sustained. The circumstances of some have excited deep sympathy in their behalf as in the case of the lamented Andre in our revolution. Others sincerely penitent have given certain promise of good citizenship if released; as in the case of Dr. Dodd in England, in the last century, for whose pardon the people petitioned in vain. But as Lord Mansfield forcibly said, if pardon be extended in one case, all previously condemned and executed under the same law have been murdered. The law should be like the law of the Medes and Persians which changeth not.

In the administration of the divine government, the mediatorial work of the Lord Jesus Christ exactly meets this exigency; and renders it possible and safe for the holy ruler to extend pardon to whom he may please, without weakening in the least the sanctions of law or relaxing its rigors. These ordinances of Judaism are shadows of the great atonement of Christ.

From them we discover that the Messiah was typified by the most insignificant representative. The animal of sacrifice, a sin-bearer dying as unclean, burned as the scouring of the earth; and also in the same ceremony by

the highest dignitary of the nation, arrayed more gloriously than a king, in robes worn on no other day. Our Messiah, judging by the contempt accorded him, was the least and most despised of men, and yet the king of heaven's glory. In him the two extremes of being meet; man of the lowest standing, and at the same time God. Our Savior not only became man; but man in the lowest condition of life. The abjectness of his lot however is no drawback to our faith, but rather the strongest possible confirmation of his highest claims. For him to have come in the character of a mighty prince and conqueror, as his people expected him, would have been the greatest encouragement to pride, and pomp, and worldliness that the human race could possibly receive; and would have been in violation of his own unworldly precepts. He was "a worm and no man" to human apprehension. He was folly to the Greeks, and to the Jews a stumbling block, meek, non-resistant, unobtrusive. Yet under all this seeming weakness, he was the uncreated being to whom suns are not more than glittering dust, scattered about his throne; to whose glance eternity is a present now; by the blast of whose nostrils all creatures would drop into their original nothing, and still there would be no loss; for he would still exist.

These types declare the infinite compassion of our Redeemer. The office of the high priest was an office of sympathy and love. The incumbent may have often been a violent and hardened ruffian; yet the office was one of unmingled kindness and affection. It evidently demanded a man who felt the woes of others as his own; who, encompassed by infirmity himself, was, by his station, expected to grieve with the mourner, weep over the erring, and sympathize with all the children of suffering. If true to his work, he would show no deference to authority, never overlook the poor, and stand between the living God and his offending people as a mediator; with unalterable zeal for Jehovah's honor, and a heart bleeding for his people's welfare. Hence "Holiness to the Lord" shone from his forehead; and upon his heart a jeweled plate bore the names of the tribes, which sometimes glistened with super-

natural splendors; and then became the Urim and Thummim. The face of Jesus was lightened with zeal for God, and on his living heart stood inscribed the names of his people. The love of Christ can be only feebly represented by the most glowing types: it stands above all comparison; and like the throne of Jehovah, outshines all else. He felt our sorrows as his own. Our miseries made no transient impression; but wore a deep trace upon his heart.

They teach that he died for human sin. The sins of men were "laid upon him," "put upon his head," in the language of Lev. 16: 21. He was treated as guilty of all the outward crimes and inward corruption of the race. This is the only possible explanation of his sufferings, which are the greatest anomaly in the annals of the universe. When sinners suffer we are not surprised; but that the holy, holy, holy one should agonize, endure death with all its most aggravated horrors of a physical nature, and in addition sustain a mental anguish wholly unexampled and inexplicable, and expire seemingly abandoned of God and man, and in the convulsions of sympathizing nature, and strange movements in the world of the invisible, passes wonder. The Scripture exposition of it alone merits attention. The vials of Jehovah's anger for human sin, were poured upon him without mixture and without reserve. "And justice poured upon his head its heavy vengeance in our stead."

4. They teach farther that his atonement for human guilt was full and adequate. He more than honored the law of God, he magnified it. It nowhere is seen so fearfully inexorable in its demands, and so absolutely certain in its penalty, as in the light of the cross. Jehovah could accept nothing less than the uttermost farthing of his claims; and he has pronounced the work of Christ a satisfaction to his law. Its virtue is derived from the infinite greatness of the sufferer.

O, ye who delight in the excitement of tales of fiction! the most exciting, the most astonishing story you can read, is the story of the cross. No romance of human imagination is so strange and novel. The dreams of the wildest fancy cannot be so marvelous, as the great fact of "God manifest in the flesh." If you love a tale in which there

is obscurity finally unraveled; whose plot is laid on the grandest scale; whose actors perform the mightiest deeds; and which have a tragical end, that leaves you aghast with surprise; let me point you to the work. It is no fiction. It has more than truth to recommend it to your attention. It is the great scene of a drama conceived in eternity, whose stage is the world, whose head is the Son of God; in which you are one of the actors; and which will end in life or death eternal to you, as you may be his friend or his enemy.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE RESURRECTION.

GENERAL PROOFS.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ might have been accomplished secretly, unwitnessed by the testimony which the world possesses; but the race would lack the evidence that he had triumphed: that his sufferings entered into his original plan; and that his enemies, by inflicting them, had but fulfilled his own intention. His career would have ended in unmitigated ignominy and gloom, instead of glory. There would have been evidence sufficient that he had risen from the dead, if no exhibition of his resurrected person had been afforded. He had died seemingly under the frown of heaven, and really by the wrath of earth and hell. What was most inexplicable, his previously imperturbable composure had been interrupted. The cloud hung over him, and deepened and thickened to the last. The hopes of his disciples went out with his life; and when he gave up the ghost, their expectations perished. Though his atoning work was complete, and could derive no additional efficacy from his open resurrection; though it might have occurred in a way eluding the scrutiny of man; yet it pleased him to give his followers a glimpse of his triumph, through witnesses chosen before of God. Even this was not deserved.

1. He was truly dead. When it became necessary to accelerate the death of the crucified by breaking their legs, the soldiers refrained from violence to the body of Jesus; because they saw that he was already dead. The collapsed frame, the head sunken on the bosom, the ghastly features as of one worn out by intolerable agonies, the gaping mouth and staring eyes, were proof. Out of mere wantonness, one of the soldiers, with his spear, pierced his sunken side; and the iron reached his very heart. The blood had already

coagulated in the pericardium (which does not usually take place in a corpse under twenty-four hours); "and forthwith came there out blood and water," the serum and clots. All had before agreed that he was truly dead; and had this not been the case, this wound of itself would have been fatal. The whole blood of the circulation had been apparently collected in the pericardium. Never was a human body more completely drained of the last drop of the vital fluid. The idea of a possible resuscitation of a body in this condition is thoroughly absurd. A return to life of a body so wounded by rupture of the heart, and a rent in the pericardium, is insupposable.

The reappearance of the crucified could be nothing else than a resurrection. His ability to walk upon his pierced feet, and use his inflamed hands, forbid the explanation by resuscitation. Had he lain in the tomb for three years instead of three days, his return to life would have been no more miraculous. He resumed life by his own inherent power; it was impossible that he should be holden of death.

II. The body had been safely deposited. "He made his grave with the rich" man "in his death." Near the place of his execution was a new sepulchre, in which no body had yet been laid, hewn out of the solid rock, and embowered in a garden: there was no other tomb in the vicinity. Joseph of Arimathea, lately become a resident of the holy city, had prepared it for himself and family. It was a costly tomb, and attractive in its surroundings.

Here Joseph himself bestowed the corpse, wrapped in linen cloths, with spices enveloping it on every side. The common mode of preparing a body was to enswathe each limb with its spices in linen wrappings, and afterwards similarly to wrap the whole in one case. For the lack of time a bed of spices had been made upon the floor of the tomb, the body laid upon it, and covered with other spices; and the whole mass enswathed with the long strips of the cloth. After such a burial, a large stone "very great" had been rolled against the opening; as the tomb lacked the door that would have finished the work. The enemies of the Nazarene, "the rulers," were satisfied with the place;

it could be made perfectly safe. They were not desirous of removing the corpse; but by the governor's permission, in order to prevent any scheme of fraud on the part of the disciples, they surrounded the spot with a file of Roman soldiers, after examining and being satisfied that the tomb actually contained the body. They also sealed the stone with the great seal of the nation, to break which was punishable at their will, making the body a state prisoner. His own tomb thus sealed and stamped, Joseph himself durst not enter.

These men remembered well our Lord's predictions of his resurrection. They knew the importance of preventing imposition; and were resolved that it should not be practiced; being aware that putting him to death was worse than in vain, if he should arise from the dead, or if it were generally believed that he did. So well did they know this, that they spent the Sabbath in perfecting their arrangements. It was their evident intention to produce his dead body on the third day, and to heap upon the unfeeling clay new insults, perhaps drag it through the streets of Jerusalem, and cast it out to their Gehenna, or to the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air. This production of the corpse appeared to them necessary for their justification in the eyes of many of the people, who had, perhaps, inwardly shuddered at what had occurred, as well as for their own satisfaction; for there was a possibility still that he might prove to be the Christ. All that could be done to guard it was done.

III. Yet the body on the third day was gone: and they accused the disciples of stealing it; while these declared, that their master was risen from the dead. Now if the rulers had known certainly, that these eleven men stole the body of their master; their enmity against them would have been a thousand fold greater than it had been against him. The rulers were men exasperated to the highest pitch of passion, more fierce than ravening wolves, having the bulk of the nation in sympathy with them, and the power in their hands. Eleven of their subjects, without influence or friends, break the state seal, steal the most important deposit, which that seal ever guarded, charge upon their

rulers the commission of the most heinous crime ever perpetrated on earth, and what comes? Certainly, worse than crucifixion. Woe to the daring wretches who array themselves against the desperation of a company of infuriated tyrants with power in their hands and the nation encouraging them! A tenfold fiercer attack upon these men might be expected. But no such result follows.

They commenced their onset upon Christianity with an impetuosity that broke over every obstacle: but in the midst of their career, when their work is but half done, they pause, refrain, adopt milder counsels, suffer themselves to be stigmatized with guilt that lacks a name, and cower before their own weak and defenseless subjects. Did ever wild beast, stung to uncontrollable fury, and dashing at his opponent with his glaring eye full upon him, pause in his headlong course, stagger, and decline the fight, unless he had received his mortal wound? Let the lion make his onset, get one taste of blood, and he is at once irresistible; he will assuredly complete his begun work of destruction. If he retreats, he has received his death-wound. Between the tone of the rulers towards Jesus Christ, and their tone towards his infinitely more obnoxious disciples, there is an immense difference. At the one time it was blood, blood, blood: and immediately after it was: "refrain from these men; if this work be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply be ye found fighting against God,"—a sentiment unani- mously responded to by them. Ah! they had met with that which made them pause, and suggested milder measures. The awful prodigies attending the crucifixion made them shudder; but did not daunt them. They still took their measures and carried them out. Something more appalling still had intervened: and they stand like a ruffian, who has dealt one blow upon his unresisting enemy, and raised his hand to finish the work of death by another; but that hand, instead of descending in power, falls nerveless; and the sword drops out of its clutch. Something has intervened.

The priests never publicly charged the disciples with this theft: nor did they even so much as allude to it. The story of the soldiers bears on its face the marks of false-

hood; when it is reported that they were overmastered by eleven desponding men; while themselves were in a dead sleep, yet knew what was passing, and recognized the assailants; but could not stir to prevent them. Men of soldierly pride would never admit such a failure in duty, at the peril of their own lives also. That the rulers made no attempt to secure their punishment, proves them unbelievers in their own version of the matter.

IV. The eleven disciples were incapable of executing such a scheme. The tale of their enemies charges them not only with the rescue of the body; but with devising and propagating the whole system of Christianity; and that, too, "beginning at Jerusalem." Now these men, and they are to be believed when they testify against themselves, so far from deceiving the people, did not themselves believe that their master would actually rise from the dead. They were "offended because of him," and debated in their hearts, whether he were not a mere human though highly gifted leader; and himself deceived as to his own pretensions. They were through fear not present through any length of time at his crucifixion; but one of them saw him die. All proved traitors to him. After his death, they were afraid to be seen together in a body in the streets of the city: and when they met it was at night, by stealth, and behind a locked door. They were so oppressed by a criminal unbelief, that while the story of the soldiers convinced the priests of the resurrection, the testimony of those who had seen him did not convince *them*. In losing Jesus they had lost all; their fond expectations had vanished; grief had settled in paralyzing stupor upon their souls; and Satan filled their minds with the direst temptations.

As they believed, the corpse was in the custody of friends; and would continue ever to be an infallible reminder of their own vain hopes, and crushing disappointment. They did not appreciate the indescribably mighty interests that centered around, and depended on that helpless clay; and took no steps even to preserve it from being cast out. As his memory could never be obliterated from their minds, every relic of their former guide would be precious: but they were too completely stunned even to remember, to

plan, or as much as to take thought. Now the story of the priests charges these men, as the sole authors of Christianity, with plotting and devising for forty days in Jerusalem, the boldest imposture ever conceived, and beguiling the whole world with it. Other impostors have invariably laid their schemes, and felt out their way in times of settled indifference concerning them. While the world was still, careless and off its guard, they have laid deep their well digested plans, and prepared their imposture. But in the case under consideration, in the short space of forty days, the whole scheme of Christianity was devised, and under the keen sunlight of hostile publicity. And when it was born, and the woman was ready to be delivered of a man-child, who should rule the nations with a rod of iron; before her stood watching the great dragon, ready to devour the fruit of her womb as soon as it should appear. And had it been the result of mere human invention, it would have been destroyed as soon as it saw the light. How was it, that it was born in the face of the dragon, and there lived and grew to its great destiny?

The assumptions of the papacy were gradual and with the consent of all parties. Mahomet's system was matured amidst the indifference of the world, and spread only because political alliance gave it an introduction. But can it be supposed, that honest and simple-hearted men, who have been the dupes of the greatest of impostors, should in the hour when keen disappointment palsied their souls in them, band together to invent a scheme of deception, and impose it on mankind? No. If their master were a deceiver, they were the greatest dupes, the most injured of all; and as soon might the doctrines of the impostor be propagated by a league of his enemies, as by his disciples; when they had lost the power of invention, and the heart to exert themselves in behalf of any system. That there should be no discrepancy in the statements of eleven men, and no treachery among them is incredible. It is the only instance on record, in which imposture was conceived and carried out by more than one individual.

Their speech and conduct are such as belong only to honesty, sincerity and conviction, They accuse themselves

of the basest cowardice and treachery in the face of repeated professions of attachment. They acknowledge an unbelief more stubborn than the willful blindness of the priests and rulers. They admit fears to have overwhelmed them altogether, and to have intimidated them to the forgetfulness of every obligation. They confess that their minds were filled with direful temptations and doubts of their master, which clung to them with a tenacity, which the temptations of Satan alone possess over souls dispirited, crushed, and on the verge of despair. They had been afraid to follow him to Jerusalem, and had gone with trembling; their fears had yielded, and expectations had arisen, that his great promises of a kingdom would be realized; but this last prop of their faith was gone; the huge waves and billows of fear had gone over them; and the sea of unbelief had swallowed them up.

Their testimony to the resurrection of Christ was offered amidst tears of the most evident compunction. Themselves they accused, as strongly as did the open enemies of their Lord. It were easier for them to die by violence than suppress the truth, which men hate to hear; which they had been base enough to betray by the forsaking of their master: a crime which they could never repeat. They were bolder in consequence of their former cowardice and in proportion to it.

V. Let the change in the feelings and conduct of those simple-hearted men be considered. From the day of the Pentecost more courageous men were never seen. They exhibited a bravery far superior to the physical courage of Alexander, Cæsar or Bonaparte. All the vaunted captains of this bloody earth fail in their exhibition of an equal heroism. Luther at Worms has admirers throughout the christian world; but Luther had strong supporters, and he knew it. The complexion of political affairs was such as to favor him, and to render the emperor less hasty in obliging the Pope. Even Luther's peril was far beneath that, in which the apostles stood: men without a leader, unlearned and ignorant men, bound together only by truth, and literally facing a frowning world.

What could have elevated them from their extreme depression of cowardice, to the sublimest heroism, but the certain knowledge that their Lord had arisen from the dead? Their conduct shows the sincerity of full conviction and absolute knowledge. This courage is the more admirable from the tenderness which accompanied it. They were not contending against the rulers or the nation; but weeping over them, calling them brethren, expressing for them their continual heaviness and sorrow of heart over their unbelief.

They had no earthly motive urging them to their chosen course. They sought not wealth; for when money was laid at their feet in piles, they showed that they would not stoop to pick it up for themselves: they sought not authority and command; for they might, if disposed like Roman bishops, have aggrandized themselves more than other mortals have ever done: but none of these things moved them. They sought martyrdom, and they found it; they drank of the cup, of which their Lord drank, and were baptized with his baptism. Unlike impostors, they courted investigation, and asserted the truth just where it could be demonstrated to be untrue, if that were possible; and established it in the very city in which earth and hell had combined to crush it. Easier far were it for Daniel to sink without trembling into the den of lions, than for men to assert the resurrection of the Nazarene in Jerusalem. But it was there they bore their testimony, loving the truth better than they loved their lives. If such conduct and such testimony cannot establish fact, and force conviction upon honest minds, human testimony can establish nothing.

VI. His resurrection from the dead is the most wonderful event of his wonderful history. When he was born there were wonders in the sky and on the earth. When he entered upon his ministry fresh wonders marked the period. Every day of the ministry added to the catalogue of marvels, which had aroused and electrified the nation. But none of them compares with the scene at the tomb, on the morning of the third day. While the keepers, fresh from their nightly repose, stood marshaled about it armed with shield and spear; and the first blush of early dawn was

marking the eastern sky; the groanings of the quaking earth, and the swayings of the ground under their feet, made stout hearts throb with fear, and aroused the sleeping city. Before a word could be exchanged with one another, a supernatural light shone upon them; and suddenly an awful angel was in their very midst, the flash of whose eyes was lightning, and his raiment lustrous with heaven's whiteness. For fear of him the keepers trembled, and became as dead men, incapable of voice or motion. Regarding not their presence, nor the state seal, but commissioned from a higher court, he approached the tomb, and beckoned away the stone, and sat upon it.

Such an enemy, sword and spear were not made to hinder. With the most terrible composure, the new guard of the tomb sat, until its quickened tenant, without haste, arose, ungirded himself from the cloths, in which he had been enveloped, laid them by themselves at one side, and the napkin which had bound his chin he refolded in its still fresh creases, laying it apart from the cloths, and walked forth from the tomb. Yes, it was he. It was the same majestic countenance, the same features, to which love lent all their light. His body must have been a perfectly bloodless body, not having a drop of the life fluid in it; his heart was a disabled engine; and there was, perhaps, an added brilliance to his eye; yet was it "flesh and bone." He was gone; and not an arm moved to hinder him; there was too much threatening in the spirit eyes, that engrossed the whole gaze of the guard. The limbs that were there to detain the prisoner were petrified; the risen one once gone, and suddenly as he came, the fearful angel disappeared, and the glare of his fiery eyes went out. The watch recovering the power of motion, and seeing their stay no longer necessary, silently, breathlessly gathered up their arms, and left the dreaded spot, to report to their employers the event. It was by the offer of money upon money, and the addition of promise to promise, that they were prevailed upon to say among the people what their trembling tongues belied, even while it was being uttered.

What effect had the news of the resurrection of the crucified upon his persecutors? They had said: "let him come

down from the cross, and we will believe?" There was a far greater wonder in his reanimation to die no more, than if yet alive he had come down from the cross. They had before professed that a sign from heaven would convince them. But of all the wonders connected with him, of all that the human mind could ask, here was the greatest. He rose from the dead to die no more. By this "he was declared to be the son of God with power." Should all his miracles fail to convince, this asserts his claim beyond controversy. Did it convince his enemies? It is possible for men to shut their eyes to truth, and stop their ears, and harden their hearts to the extent of reprobation. The path pursued by the opposition led to the pit, and had no turn in its course: they followed it to the end.

Why did not twelve legions of such awful protectors interpose before, to prevent the deed that set earth and sun aghast? It was his own will that held them back and said as it were: hands off, let them do what seemeth them good: let them show themselves. His heart was set on dying for men. When he needed the aid of angels, they were ready to do his bidding. Around his cross had hung in mute astonishment this fearful one, and the terrible angel of the first-born in Egypt, and the one before whom Sennacherib's host had slept the sleep, that knows no waking. Their arm was ready to deliver; but the love of the great surety would not accept deliverance; or be satisfied with less than the eternal redemption of his rebel creatures.

His resurrection was not indeed public; but enemies and friends were witnesses, that it did take place. It was the question of that age. Those, who stubbornly persisted in calling him a deceiver, resisted of course the evidence of his rising from the dead. On this point the church and its enemies took issue in that generation. At present it is admitted, that no event of history is more firmly established by all manner of evidence: and no one denies it, unless he rejects all that God has taught.

VII. It was a demonstration that he had triumphed. "He was crucified in weakness; but he was raised in power." Earth and hell had without restraint spit their venom

upon him. His friends had thought him invulnerable; and the sight of him yielding had scattered them all, and inflamed tenfold the rage of his enemies. But his resurrection proved that he had submitted voluntarily to insult and death: that it was his design to wear the thorne, receive the buffet and the scourge, and expire upon the cross. His enemies had but done what he purposed that they might do. Despair of pardon at his hands, if he proved to be indeed the son of God, transformed them into fiends intent on all possible crime. Little they knew of his readiness to forgive. They had put him to death in the midst of the feast when the millions of Israel were assembled: and their guarding of the sepulchre had advertised the undeniable fact of his resurrection to the ends of the earth. Their own weapons had turned against themselves: into the pit which they had digged, themselves had fallen.

Hereby was it also shown, that he had prevailed with God as a prince. That he should suffer at the hands of men astonished his followers; but the agony of his soul was unaccountable. It looked as though God had forsaken him. He had been overwhelmed by anguish; and though, after the first scene in Gethsemane, there had been no more visible fainting or derangement of the body; yet was it plain to their eyes, that his agony was unrelieved; and that his life was prolonged only that he might suffer. Till his death he was not delivered: and he seemed to die accursed of God. The gloom of his soul had deepened; and had become a darkness that might be felt. This to his friends was the inexplicable circumstance; and the one which Satan urged most effectually to their overthrow. This seemed to mark him as an impostor successful for a time; but overtaken finally with the horrors of retribution.

But he rose; and their doubts vanished, like the darkness before the rising sun. Their gloom was scattered. That holy countenance, disfigured as it had been for hours with agony, now shone with serene triumph. God had released him from the tomb, declaring thereby: "it is finished;" heaven is reconciled.

VIII. He triumphed over death and the grave. The bonds of death formed as slight an obstacle in the way of his resurrection, as did the weapons of the guard. If his followers are conscious of his present power removing hardness of heart, despair, and sin by a free forgiveness; just as certainly shall their sleeping dust feel the energy of his quickening power. As Christ arose, to die no more, so all his followers shall. As he ascended to the right hand of the Father, so shall his people follow him.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS.

THE TALE OF THE SOLDIERS.

The subject of the resurrection of our Lord cannot be too closely investigated; as it is the great evidence, on which he himself based his reception by his own people and the world; the one great fact, unlike all else in the history of the race, which demonstrates his mission, and declares him with power to be the Son of God. 'Tis well to view it from every side; and especially to give close consideration to the only explanation of the occurrence offered by the enemies. If the resurrection did not take place as related in the gospels, the true history of the matter is given in the version put forth by the Roman guard; that the disciples stole the body while they were asleep. If this explanation bears evident marks of falsehood upon its face, we are then shut up to the account given by the evangelists.

And first, this explanation is the story of men confessedly asleep at the time of the occurrence of the event, and very soundly asleep; as they were not disturbed by the footsteps of approaching invaders, and the unavoidable noise of moving "a very great stone" from the tomb. If but a single one of the four guards were aroused from their light and festive slumber, the robbery of the sepulchre would have signally failed; or had the corpse been in the hands of the robbers, it would have been rescued instantly. But the plea admits that the guard continued in unbroken sleep during the pillage; and only awoke to find the thieves and their booty gone past recovery.

The garden was probably a very small plat of ground, extending back to a ledge of solid rock, in which a new tomb had been excavated, whose floor was on the level of

the soil, or but a trifle below the surface; the four soldiers were thus in close proximity to each other. The beat of one was directly before the tomb, probably; and thus the invading party must have accomplished their work in such close neighborhood to the watch, as to have almost touched them, unless the greatest precaution were taken.

It was certainly very singular that all the guards, whose business it was to be in constant motion along their respective beats, should, without exception, have been locked in so profound a slumber, as to be able to make no definite charge; neither specifying the number of the assailants, nor identifying any one of them. Indeed by their own confession, that the disciples of Jesus were the miscreants, was a matter of surmise only; as they were unable to testify to the identity of any. Their utter ignorance of all the minor circumstances of the theft; by what way the aggressors came and departed; the tools by whose use they moved the stone; the means by which the sound of its roll was deadened; how many entered the sepulchre, etc., confirms the opinion that none of these things really took place.

It were easier to believe that the great earthquake displaced the stone that closed the tomb; and that a wild beast rushed in, and carried away the missing body. The soldiers were wholly unable to deny this explanation, according to their own statement. The whole sum of their testimony then could be no more than that they were all in a dead sleep at the time, and were wholly unable to give an account of what took place, or to designate the trespassers at all. Their testimony can then be pronounced false without proceeding further in the examination; as they charge guilt upon parties of whose action in the case, they could have no knowledge whatever, according to their own statement. Men, confessedly unfaithful to so great a trust confided to them, cannot be implicitly believed in any statement.

And then that the guards should have continued in sound sleep during an earthquake is an incredible circumstance. Such an incident as the motion of the solid ground, accompanied by the deep subterranean groanings which always attend it, more terrifying than all other noises ever heard,

produces the greatest panic ever experienced. The stoutest hearts fail at the sound and shock; though sunk in the deepest slumber, every one is at once astir; houses are emptied instantly of their inmates; and the whole population awaits in breathless suspense the repetition of the portent. The very brutes seem to have a presentiment, and oppressed by the death-like stillness of the air, manifest the greatest fear even before the shock is felt. Horses tremble violently, and break from their fastenings if possible; cattle leave their food, and roam in the wildest terror; the smaller domestic animals exhibit the same consternation; and men do not sleep.

To profess to have continued sleeping during a "great" tremor of the earth is to advertise a falsehood. This shock in question was short; but sharp and violent by the testimony of inspiration. Sleeping guards might have been thrown off their feet by it, when the surface of the ground rolled like the deck of a ship in a heavy sea; and the tomb of Jesus was the centre of the disturbance. If previously asleep, the soldiers in charge were in one second as wide awake, as they ever were in all their lives. We were amazed before at the extent of their knowledge during a period of somnolency; but that an earthquake should only rock them into a sounder slumber, makes too large a draft upon human credulity; and brands the whole tale as a sheer invention, too coarse to be accepted by those only to whom reason is no longer a guide; and whom God has given up to believe a lie. There are still occasional believers in it; there are also occasional maniacs.

To induce the soldiers to circulate a report so prejudicial to themselves, reflecting upon them as recreant to their trust, and failing to such an extent in their military duty, required the bribe of large money. This confession of being overcome by the stratagem of a few plotters, implied a disgrace more grievous to them, than any compunction for denying the truth. They were more open to the consideration of money, than they were to all the claims of truth and righteousness. The ranks of the common soldiery of Rome were filled from the low and brutal classes of society, having

little regard for moral distinctions, and a contempt for all the questions of the superstition of the Jews.

No lie can be framed by the most cunning experts, that does not bear upon its front the stamp of its untrustworthiness. Truth alone is self-consistent, and meets all the demands of careful scrutiny; it alone can endure the searching process, and invites it; as the pure gold without alloy, alone can abide the test of the chemist's crucible. A lie passes among men generally for the most venial of all sins, and enjoys all the extenuations and justifications of corrupt casuistry often; in this case it derives its enormity from the magnitude of the occasion which prompted it, and the opposition to the Holy One which it revealed.

The opponents of Jesus constituted the party of falsehood; as they charged that he had forbidden tribute to Cæsar; that he was stirring up the people against Rome; that he had threatened to destroy the Jewish temple; that he deserved to die the death of a malefactor; though a charge that would hold could not be framed against him, nor a witness be brought; that his body did not rise; but was stolen. Like all liars, who always accuse others of falsehood, by their flippant denunciation of the apostles they were proclaiming their own untruth.

They would have put to death every one who contradicted them, had not God mightily protected them. More abandoned and daring men never lived; like the fabled Sisyphus, they were engaged in rolling up the steep sides of a mountain a stone so heavy, that its recoil crushed them.

They formed the party of violence, murder and fraud. These were the men who put Stephen to death for saying that the temple should be destroyed, as their own prophets had foretold; Dan IX: 26; who would have killed Saul of Tarsus in the streets of their city, before he could pass from the tower Antonia to the council room, a distance of not many yards; and simply because he preached to the Gentiles. With which party was the truth? Has it not been decided by the God of battles, to whose decision they appealed? His hand was so evidently against them in the

destruction of their city and temple; as to extort from Titus the repeated acknowledgement, that his success was due to the help of heaven.

These rulers were writhing under the apprehension, that they had crucified their Messiah; and they were being branded with the guilt of the greatest crime ever committed on earth. What will not sin do? It will assault the messenger of truth however accredited, and wet its hands in the blood of divine innocence. It will pursue the dead with an éumity that never falters; and breed the pestilence of deadly discord and strife so maliciously, that the world in self-defense must arise to the unusual work of crushing out the Jewish race from under heaven, and shedding the last drop of blood from Jewish veins: an unattainable result, yet one eagerly sought. The nation is as numerous still, as it ever was in the palmiest days of its prosperity, and stands as a monument of the divine anger. With which party was the truth?

The disciples did not desire the possession of their master's body. Their only wish was, that it might be preserved from insult and disgrace; that it might not be cast out with the bodies of the malefactors; or dragged in heartless mockery through the streets of Jerusalem. They were aware that it had been delivered into the custody of friends and deposited in the tomb of an avowed disciple. The question "*cui bono?*" decides irreversibly the injudiciousness of farther steps. The charge of the priests, which we are considering, contained the accusation, that the eleven wished the possession of the body for the purpose of deception; that they were schemers engaged in concocting a gigantic fraud, to impose upon the credulous world.

It is undeniable, however, that the eleven were not members of a party, or privy to any previously concerted plan of combined action. Jesus had never consulted, or suffered advisers; and the disciples were not apprised of the coming events of the dread ordeal, through which they had passed, whose successive occurrences took them by utter surprise, as having misunderstood all previous intimations. The idea of a literal death and an actual resurrection had never entered their minds. Themselves were the dupes and vic-

tims of their own misconceptions; they were not plotters. The whole history shows that they were not principals in any deception: they were merely spectators, standing aghast at an altogether unexpected consummation, which paralyzed their very souls, and rendered them incapable of ordinarily wise procedure.

The idea even of preserving the body from public insult did not originate with them: they were so crushed and dispirited as to be unable to take a single step at their own suggestion. The events of that passover had stupefied their souls to that degree, that nothing seemingly had power to arouse them; they had lost the ability to invent. They had yielded to the fiercest storm of angry feeling, that ever burst upon the heads of unsuspecting victims; which had swept away their leader; and held his mangled body as a menace of the vengeance preparing for them.

They were momentarily fearing their own arrest, which had been purposed by the leaders: a price was, as it were, already set upon their heads; and they durst not be seen upon the street in company; nor meet except in an upper room, locked against intrusion. Treachery in their own band had deepened the hue of their mistrust. Not a ray of encouragement shone upon them, and the memory of their Lord's predicted return to life had completely vanished.

That while they were aching under the sense of the keenest disappointment, and trembling for their lives, they should combine to give a false version of the history, which would imperil them a thousand fold more, for no motive of gain of any kind, it is difficult to believe. The account which they give under all this pressure is the truth.

Every one conversant with the facts, sees that these men were honest seekers after truth, as they afterwards became its fearless defenders. The enemies were not endeavoring to prevent them from conspiring in a falsehood; but to keep them silent, and restrain them from uttering the truth. They were men of conviction, refusing, with reliance upon God, to be intimidated. They could not "but speak the things which they had seen and heard," in obedience to an authoritative divine command. That the nation understood the truth to be with them, is clear from the numbers

who forsook the party of falsehood, and gave their adhesion to the side of truth, in the face of bitter persecution.

The treatment which the soldiers received is proof of the resurrection of Jesus. By the demands of the Roman military code, guards, who had slept upon their post, were punishable with death. This is the law of military service in our day; but the Roman discipline, unalterable as the laws of the Medes and Persians, was rigidly enforced. With us deserters are seldom shot; and some evasion of the law is discovered for the sleeping sentinel; but in the iron age of Roman ascendancy, no mitigation of the stern and merciless demands of the army service was indulged. Discipline never slackened out of consideration for human life: it never sickened at the sight of human gore. The citizens of Rome were educated from childhood to the view of blood. The "spectacles," which delighted the populace, and gathered them almost daily in crowding myriads, were contests of men with men or with hungry wild beasts, whose termination was always in the sacrifice of human life, the sight of which sacrifice was the culmination of the entertainment.

Its colosseum seated eighty thousand spectators; and its arena was almost continually soaked with blood; and the stern gratification of the hearts of iron, female as well as male, knew no bounds; when the popular favorites in the ring went down one after another in death. "The rigor of their military order was never relaxed."

The apostle Peter once lay in Herod's dungeon, chained between two soldiers; while two others kept ward in their respective stations outside. In the morning Peter was gone, the two outside watchers having slept, as rightly thinking their guard superfluous and unnecessary. The result was that Herod commanded the four keepers to be put to death, as having lost their man. It is not easy to see why the two watchmen inside should have suffered the extreme penalty; as they were authorized and expected to sleep: their prisoner being wholly unable to escape without disturbing them.

There was no foolery about Roman discipline: its rules were bloody, and knew no relaxation. If these men, who watched the tomb of Jesus, had been really careless and

sleeping, no power could have saved them from death. The Jewish priests, frantic at the loss of the body, would have demanded the enforcement of the law; the governor, indignant at the breach of discipline, would have ordered their instant execution; for nothing connected with the Nazarene could be concealed from his jealous scrutiny. The fact, that these men were not harmed nor censured, is proof that the governor understood the case perfectly: and the further fact, that the priests urged for no punishment for men criminally careless over a charge more important than was ever committed to the keeping of a guard, confirms the opinion.

These men had no need of sleep; they were fresh from the repose of the early night; and their duty did not begin until the cock-crowing about 3 A. M. and lasted only three hours. The time in all the armies of modern service is four hours; and the boys, when simply in camp, make light of it. These men were not worn by previous vigil, nor exhausted by campaign duty during the day. The case might have been different; if this had occurred at a time when the legionaries were in active service, and oppressed with wearing efforts. Men, as they were, of the highest physical vigor, accustomed to the labors and hardships of ancient warfare, having enjoyed the full six hours of previous sleep, were not likely to be overcome by deep and fast slumber on their post, before one single hour had elapsed. The watch had probably been newly set.

The very novelty of the situation must have kept their attention keenly alive; they were guarding not only against invasion from without; but against apprehended trouble from the tenant of the sepulchre; who it was feared, might undertake to burst the bonds of death and the grave, and escape to life again. Nor must it be forgotten that this was the most eventful and important night of the whole tragedy. The members of the Sanhedrin had been unable to close their eyes in sleep during the night of the arrest, and thousands besides them. It is not unlikely that quite a stream of visitors and observers had set towards the tomb, during the whole bright night of the third day, im-

pelled by no other interest than mere curiosity. No other subject held the attention of the people.

A fact, which merits consideration in this connection, is, that when the rulers had the apostles in their power, after their arrest for the healing of the cripple at the gate of the temple, and brought forward their complaint against them; they did not charge them with the theft of the body, which should have been their gravest accusation. Indeed they might easily have made it a capital offense; as it involved the breaking of the state seal, and the plunder of the state property, in the promotion of a fraud, intended to consign the rulers themselves to eternal infamy.

The words of this complaint are: "Ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine" that Jesus has arisen from the dead, "and intend to bring this man's blood upon us" as having unjustly executed him: the demonstration of this injustice being found in his resurrection and return to life.

Dr. Dwight believed, that in these words is contained an unconscious confession of the resurrection of the Savior. Instead of charging home upon the apostles the crime of which, according to them, these men must have known themselves guilty, and the deception which at that very instant they were practicing; they are irritated by the danger impending over themselves of being found guilty in their own persons. A guilty conscience seems to speak in their words. And this is a confession of the reality of the resurrection. It is impossible to suppose that they would have neglected the opportunity of condemning the apostles, and capitally, too, had there been truth in their own declarations. Could cause have been found, they would have enforced judgment to the bitter end, for their own vindication.

The proverbial stubbornness of the Jewish character was well illustrated in the subsequent conduct of these rulers. Their version of the affair was not only put in circulation at the very earliest period, and by the soldiers themselves; that the falsehood might seem to have the priority, and might nip in the bud any disturbance in Jewish communities throughout the world; but we learn incidentally from other sources, that letters were dispatched from Jerusalem

to every synagogue in the then known world, reciting all the particulars with their own false explanation. When Matthew wrote his gospel some years later, this report was current wherever Jews were found; that the disciples stole the body of their Lord while the soldiers on guard slept. It is no new thing, that falsehood enjoys rapidity of dissemination for outdistancing the most important and precious truth. The operators in the cause of the evil and the false seem also to be more industrious and ubiquitous than the most zealous apostles of the truth.

Peter introduces another argument for the resurrection of his master in his discourse on the day of Pentecost. It is taken from the continuance right along of the miraculous works, as though he was still present. The sending by him of the Holy Ghost, and the tongues of fire, and the restoration of the poor cripple, who lay at the gate beautiful, just such a subject as Jesus was wont to select, poor, despised and needy beyond the power of man to relieve, were instances. Indeed all the mighty works, the healing of the sick and the raising of the dead, continued without interruption. Jesus unseen was present still, as appears from Peter's own words to Eneas: "Eneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole." These things demonstrated his resurrection, and his session at the right hand of the Father, and the presence of his own beneficent agency with the church according to his promise.

Jesus has rolled away the stone from the sepulchre effectually and forever, and "brought life and immortality to light," demonstrating it in his own person.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS.

THE WITNESSES.

And showed him openly, not to all the people: but to witnesses chosen before of God. Acts x: 40.

That the risen Savior should be exhibited before a limited number of witnesses, is in harmony with his own method in all his mighty works. They were all performed in the absence of the crowd. Two or three witnesses are the stipulated number, sufficient to establish any fact by testimony. Our Lord suffered more spectators when it was unavoidable; but evidently preferred the presence of fewer. The apostles from long-continued association were competent judges of his identity: having enjoyed the opportunity of beholding him in every attitude. No brother could more certainly identify a brother, than these could their beloved master. It was not to be expected that the celestial dignity of the son of God would allow him to show himself before those, whose accusations he would not answer by the slightest notice, and who blinded their own eyes against the most patent truth. The certainty of his resurrection was admitted by his friends only after the most cautious and hesitating examination. Let the witnesses be heard.

The first was Mary Magdalene, of whom we know only what a hasty glimpse of her conduct on this occasion reveals. By some she is supposed to be the penitent woman, whom Jesus forgave in the house of Simon at Nain; because her name first enters into the history just at that point. Renan sneers at the tale of the resurrection, as being a conceit originating in the excited imagination of an impressible woman, in the tumult of her sorrow; when she had lost the last trace of the master, whom she adored.

According to him, she was the author of the idea, which the disciples hastened to adopt; and make the basis of the fraud, which they imposed upon the world. Their success in such a fraud would be a greater miracle than the resurrection of their master.

But it is quite evident, that imagination had nothing to do with the appearance of her lost master; for she was not prepared for the scene which ensued. She had no anticipation of a resurrection; having come with others to complete the burial arrangements by swathing first the limbs separately, and afterwards the whole body in linen cloths filled with spices. None of the ordinary attentions of a decent interment had been shown; none of the loud and piteous wailings had been indulged; no heart-breaking adieux had been allowed. Her woman's heart demanded the tenderest care of the dead; and that nothing should be omitted which could gratify this sympathy and love; that their leave-taking might be enjoyed in all the luxury of grief, for which Orientals are noted.

She was looking for no miracle: no excited fancy was preparing her for some amazing sequel. She had come on a plain matter-of-fact errand; and was as cool and collected, as when about the common businesses of life. Her coolness was surprising: and showed itself when, stooping, she looked into the sepulchre, and saw two angels in white, sitting one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain, and answered their question: "Woman, why weepest thou?" She seems to have been neither agitated nor alarmed at the vision; but responded as she would have done to mortals. Her conduct contrasts well with that of the other women narrated in Mark 16: 8, who fled with trembling and astonishment, when addressed by the angels. Men the most fearless could not have shown better self-possession.

A better witness could not have been selected for this, the grandest of all occasions. Startled she may have been for a moment; but not disturbed, nor thrown off her balance. Neither was she alarmed, at the sound of a man's footsteps approaching down the path behind her; but partially turned, and said to the supposed gardener: "Sir, if thou hast

borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away."

She thought that her beloved Lord had been refused even a tomb. Through her distress she had not recognized him; until the well known voice pronounced her name in a tone of surprise. She looked more closely and saw that it was Jesus. "My Master," she exclaimed, and would have seized him in her arms; had he not forbidden. "Touch me not," he said; "for I do not yet ascend to my father." The perfect tense is here used for the present. "But go and tell my brethren, that (after several days) I ascend to my father and your father, to my God and your God." A few minutes later, the other women were permitted to touch him. He had objected only to being clasped in the arms of Mary.

He may have allowed during his life the closest familiarity; after his resurrection he was more reserved; a line of behavior which their own awe rendered easy, and sanctioned as wise. The other women enjoyed directly the privilege of handling his feet, and became witnesses, that he was risen from the dead. The apostles seem not to have received their testimony with perfect credence, on account of the known susceptibility of the sex; but the keen-eyed observation, loving recognition and unhesitating worship, showed that to them there was no doubt.

And perhaps in the whole apostolic college none could be found more reliable, more safe from imposition, and more capable than Mary Magdalene. She enjoys a distinction which the mother of Jesus might envy; but which was refused to her for wise reasons. The Magdalene's love was as pure and as strong as earth afforded; and justified her selection.

The next witnesses in course are the two who went to Emmaus on that remarkable first day, the name of one of whom has been preserved, Cleopas. That they were overwhelmed by some sudden blow, a stranger might easily discover. As they languidly walked in close and absorbing conversation, a traveler overtook them, rallied them on their sadness, and inquired its cause. His visible sympathy divested them of all reserve; and they revealed to him the hopes, which they had entertained from the mission of the

Nazarene, and the crushing disappointment under which all his followers were sunk in consequence of his death.

Nevertheless they by no means regarded him as an impostor; they still looked upon him as "a prophet mighty in word and deed before God and all the people." Heaven's approval of him was undeniable. His death had been attended by so astonishing prodigies, that nothing else was talked of among the millions of sojourners in the city, until not one could be found ignorant. Moreover a rumor was coming into circulation when they left the city, that he had returned to life; it was based however only on the report of certain women. One thing was true nevertheless: the tomb was empty, and the body was gone; and they were anxiously awaiting developments. Had they indeed believed that he was risen; they would not have been found upon the road; however pressing their business, but in the posture of devout expectation near the tomb.

After they had fully unbosomed themselves, the stranger took up the discourse; and upbraiding them for their not believing the prophets, he showed them from the scriptures that it behooved the Christ to suffer these things, from which an excess of glory would follow. He reminded them that the Christ was the lamb of God, without spot of sin, laying down his life for the sin of others; that the lamb was a diminutive type. When Isaac was bound upon the altar, a better picture of the great offering on Calvary was presented. God's Issac, the son of his delight, would be the victim; and what Abraham fully intended to do, but was spared from accomplishing, God himself would do: "slay his son." Jesus had died at the hand of the Father. Having begun at Moses, he expounded to them in course the scriptures of the prophets, affirming the necessity of the death of the Son of God's delight for the sin of the world. The predictions of his victory over death and the grave were recited and explained. The hearts of his two hearers burned within them with joy and wonder as they listened, as the hearts of Christians always will at the mention of these precious truths.

Arrived at Emmaus, they compelled him to go in and tarry with them, eager for a continuance of the exciting

discourse. When the table was spread, he took his seat at its head, as had been his wont; and taking the bread in his hands, as his manner had been, with uplifted eyes he blessed it, and gave to them, and they knew him; his characteristic procedure not being so much a giving of thanks, as the pronouncing of his blessing, who has the power to bless. Their eyes had been so holden by the brimming tears that they had not recognized him; neither had they closely observed him; not having the slightest suspicion of his identity. A soldier, wounded by a ball through the foot, is fortunate if in six months he can bear his weight upon it; and how could they suspect their Lord; when his feet had been pierced and inflamed by hours of torture? The faintest shadow of such a suspicion never entered their thoughts; though none but Jesus could cast such new and unexpected light upon the holy word. Each text became a luminous star under his comment, with healing in its beams for their wounded spirits.

Snatching a hasty meal, they returned at once to the city, bearers of good tidings; and found the eleven gathered together and them that consorted with them, saying; "the Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto "Simon." And *they* told the things that were done in the way; and how he was known of them in breaking of bread. And as they thus spoke, Jesus himself stood in their midst, and said: "Peace be unto you." The sudden appearance of a form with the voice in their midst, made them all retreat to the walls of the room, with the utmost terror in their faces. But he required them to handle him, and be convinced that he was flesh and bones, and not a spirit: he even ate before them in proof of his material existence.

The two disciples of whom we are speaking, were good witnesses; and the vision was not the product of imagination. And the method pursued bespoke the Lord himself. He first made them understand the sense of the prophets, and what the Scriptures required; and how exactly all its predictions had been fulfilled: and after they had gained an insight into the necessity of his death and resurrection; he revealed himself and vanished out of their sight; leaving them in an ecstasy of wonder, and throbbing

with the discovery of a new heaven of truth. The changed manner of the men was as strong evidence as their words: their sadness was gone; and a joy unspeakable and full of glory, shone in their countenances.

It was necessary that this further appearance to the eleven should occur on that notable first day; in order to disabuse their minds effectually of all supposition, that what had been seen, was a mere phantasm, an illusive likeness of their master. That the form should become visible at will, and vanish utterly out of sight in a moment, might naturally suggest such a theory. But they were made to know that their Lord in flesh and bone was present; and that the very body deposited in the tomb, etherialized indeed in a degree by death, but still in all its accidents the same, had arisen.

The next witness in course of time was Peter. We have no particulars of the interview: consummate delicacy is exhibited in throwing a veil over all that passed between the recreant apostle, and the Lord, whom he had denied. The fact that he appeared to him in some solitary place whither he had retired to weep, is proof in itself. It had been human to leave him to the last to be favored with an interview, or to have passed him by altogether. But Jesus came to comfort those who mourn, to heal the broken hearted, to nurse the broken reed and the smoking flax; and he hastened to save him from utter despair by assurance of free forgiveness. It is not necessary to know particulars of the meeting: the fact that it occurred proves that it was Jesus himself.

Peter was not the man to be reticent; but was so full of demonstration; that none could doubt, that he had actually seen the Lord; and that a mountain burden had been lifted from his heart. To know that though ashamed of Jesus, Jesus was not ashamed of him, made him wild with delight, though more tearful than ever. He had the confidence of the group, as a man of the most transparent sincerity, and at the farthest remove from deceit and fraud. His bold and fearless character, and outspoken earnestness, and devotion to the master, for whom he had given up all, gave his word weight: especially when en-

forced by the new joy and life infused into his spirit by the interview with the forgiving Christ.

Yet was there one of the company unconvinced by the word of Peter; though with the most impassioned energy, he recounted what he had seen and heard: and with mingled tears of self-condemnation and joy most solemnly attested the truth. The story of Cleopas and his companion had no effect upon him, though enforced by the new light cast upon the scriptures by the interpretation of the master himself. The accounts of the women were to him as idle tales having their origin in their extravagant imagination. He would not believe his own eyes and ears. In some cases the senses were not reliable: the eye itself might be the parent of deception. This was Thomas the doubter, who always looked upon the dark side, and ever anticipated the worst.

After having listened at length to all that could be said by every one that had been privileged to see the risen one; he took his deliberate stand; that with him seeing was not believing. He required not only to see the Lord; he must not only see the wounds; he must explore them with his finger; he must thrust his hand into the spear gash in his side. His scepticism had made him slack about consorting with his fellow-disciples for fear of deception. Unless he could find actual flesh and bone, and touch the death marks of Calvary, he would not believe. He was evidently well posted about the gullibility of mortals; and knew to what a great extent the imagination can impose upon the credulous. Religion with him was not a matter of sentiment merely.

Like a business man called upon to venture his all upon some scheme, he would sift every statement, question every step, and advance only as he found solid footing. It was with him a question of eternal interest; not for himself alone but for generations to follow. He would assent only as compelled by the most unequivocal certainty. Instead of accepting the testimony of others in so vital a matter, he demanded the fullest satisfaction of all his senses. More it was impossible to ask, except to insist upon a

larger number of witnesses. There was certainly among the disciples one, as cautious and reluctant as the most exacting of cavilers could be.

On the next first day all were assembled with the doors shut and locked for fear of the Jews; and suddenly Jesus was in their midst with his usual salutation: "Peace be unto you." Turning to Thomas, he repeated his very words; and submitted himself to the very examination demanded by him. Convinced by this testimony of the three concurrent senses, sight, hearing, and touch, the unbelief of Thomas was swept away, like the mists of the morning before the rising sun. Probably upon his bended knees, he exclaimed: "my Lord and my God." His doubts were laid in the empty sepulchre to know no resurrection. He was one of the witnesses "chosen of God," and wisely on account of his cold, practical nature.

Unbelief had its attorney in the very household of Christ; and could not demand ampler satisfaction, than it found at the very threshold of the new institution. Everything connected with Jesus can bear the keenest sunlight of scrutiny; and appears to the greatest advantage, when submitted to the most trying tests. Thomas, the representative of the large class of honest doubters, is convinced upon his own terms, and gives his life in defense of the truth, at which he so long hesitated.

The next witnesses in succession are the five hundred and more, who saw him on the appointed mountain in Galilee, including the apostles. When he was seen "some doubted." Probably their doubts were removed, when he came and spake unto them. Illusions, arising from morbid conditions, are confined to single individuals: and but a single sense is disordered. They are not found affecting a large group of people, and showing a derangement of sight and hearing both together. He came and spake to them, saying: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." This power was vested in him, when he first offered himself as mediator, but was henceforth to be more actively exercised for the promotion of his kingdom.

Then followed the great commission to "go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," with the

promise: "Lo I am with you always even to the end of the world." The 97th Psalm is Messianic, and reads: "Jesus reigns, let the earth rejoice."

This commission terminated the peculiar privileges of the Jewish people: and opened the kingdom of heaven to the Gentiles. He spake with a supreme authority, and with a love, which made no exception against the Jews; but required his followers to begin at Jerusalem, with the offer of salvation to his most stubborn enemies, every one of them. Who could doubt that Jesus was the speaker, when the loving anxieties of his inmost heart thus spoke out? These men carried the gospel to the ends of the earth; and the dagon of idolatry fell before them: its hold had been long loosening.

Gibbon's reasons for the rapid spread of Christianity are well selected, though stated with many a covert sneer at the truth.

I. The inflexible and intolerant zeal of the early Christians, possessing all the Jewish stubbornness, connected with the assurance of the most positive conviction.

II. The doctrine of a future life, improved by all that could give weight and efficacy to the representations of eternal misery, etc.

Whence did these Christians obtain their positive and certain knowledge of a future life? this intolerant zeal against idolatry? this fixed and immovable conviction of the rewards and punishments of the unseen world? which they described with the realism which might belong to messengers returned from the spirit land? All this assurance of conviction, this intolerant zeal which would die sooner than abjure, this energy of propagandism, resulted from the unimpeachable certainty of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The arguments of the philosophers expressed the desire of immortality, rather than the assurance of it: the return of Jesus from the dead was a demonstration of it. In comparison with the retributions of the future, all earthly interests become insignificant.

The last testimony cited is that of the early church, expressed in the Apostles' Creed. In it the primitive church utters its convictions of the truth as originally received

from the apostles. The last clause of this creed reads: "I believe in the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting." Whence did the church obtain this article of faith? Heathen writings are full of disquisitions upon a future state; philosophers uttered volumes about it; but the idea of the resurrection of the body never entered the mind of the boldest speculator of them all. There is nothing in experience or analogy to suggest it; it is contrary to both reason and experience. The thought of its possibility was never born; no reasonings could ever inspire the slightest anticipation of it. He who dreamed it would have been accounted a madman. The simple announcement of it by Paul set the Athenian Areopagus wild with derision. Haughty reason would even now pronounce it contrary to its first principles.

Whence has the Christian world obtained its belief in the resurrection of the body? and that the same, which was sown in God's garden, will reappear in the harvest of the future? It is evidently a matter of pure revelation, undiscoversible by human genius.

This revelation was made when, on the third day after the burial of Jesus, a mighty angel descended like a flaming meteor to the tomb of Joseph, about which God had his guards, as well as the Jewish rulers. Jerusalem was shaken with a "very great earthquake," as his feet touched the ground. For fear of him, the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. A man paralyzed with fear does not fall to the ground; but stands rigid as a statue, incapable of motion, or cry, and almost of breath. A wave of the angel's hand beckoned the stone away; on which he sat, with eyes flaming with such indignation as heaven felt at the murder of Calvary. His robes were of such white as earth could not soil. As he faced the guard, every eye was riveted on HIM. Had the ground yawned behind them, they would not have known it. They saw only the eyes of fire. This angel was only the porter: his office was simply to open the door; not to resuscitate the dead. One lay in that tomb, whom it was impossible that death should hold. It

is an inexplicable wonder that he died, the lord of life. He laid down his life, and he took it again; he had the power.

He arose as leisurely as men arise from the couch of sleep, unrolled the bandages that wrapped his frame; took off the towel that bound his chin; folded it and laid it by itself apart; left the impress of his body upon the bed of spices, on which it had been deposited; and the ooze of his wounds upon the cloth that had enwrapped him. Without deranging the couch of his repose, and without haste he was gone; and no eye had seen him. The lightnings that burned in the sockets of those spirit eyes, were too threatening to allow attention to the sepulchre, or a look towards any other object. The guards saw nothing else. The great forerunner left the grave a triumphant victor; he broke the path, which all his people shall tread. He left evidences of another life stronger than words. When all was over, the spirit guard faded out of view, and retiring into the sepulchre, showed himself to the friends of Jesus as gentle and tender as he had been terrible to his enemies

This was revelation or rather demonstration. Let reason pronounce as absurd the idea of the regathering of the scattered dust; let her pile up difficulties and impossibilities; the faith of mankind will never waver, Jesus has arisen. The same body retaining the wounds of the cross, and the gash in the side, only etherealized, came back to a life infinitely above the earthly. It was not a spiritual body until the ascension. This was the great sign, on which our Lord rested his reception; it was the climax of miracle. Mighty as had been his works, they were subordinate and inferior. This exhibited "the exceeding greatness of his power;" by it he was "declared to be the son of God with power."

A doctrine is connected with it. If he died for sin, men are sinners; if he rose from the dead men shall rise; if his body was changed, and he ascended; his people shall follow. Corruption shall be changed into incorruption; weakness, dishonor and shame into glory. As certainly as he was with us in his humiliation and sorrows, shall his people be with

him in victory over death and the grave, and in eternal glory. Dying Christian, do terrors surround you? Look up like Stephen, Jesus is bending over you to receive your departing spirit. Church of the living God, art thou in straits and reduced to despair? Jesus still lives; he is in every storm that assails you; and though the waves may threaten to engulf your bark, not a hair of your head shall perish without his permission.

CHAPTER XL.

THE TWELVE APOSTLES.

As our Lord was to be removed from the world before a church was organized, or a reliable record of his teachings was made, in order that credible testimony to his acts and doctrines might remain, he associated with himself the twelve. He would not leave the perpetuation of his history to tradition, or the reports of unauthorized witnesses, of whom many, as we learn from Luke, volunteered their reminiscences. His words were to work as leaven; were to germinate as seeds in the soil; and therefore must be reported verbatim. To these twelve was thus committed the greatest trust ever confided to mortals. The world of the future was to see through their eyes, to hear through their ears, and to understand through their report. To be fitted for this responsibility, they were necessarily to be closely identified with the great master, to be in perfect sympathy with his mission, and divinely accredited as his heralds to the ages. The continual aid of the Holy Spirit was promised, and was needful to render their memory of him as vivid as the impressions of present objects upon their senses: and so to purify their motives that they should not deviate from the strictest truth; but display their master in all respects as he was, as he acted, and as he taught. While none about him understood the far reach of his arrangements, our Lord was acting for all time and all humanity.

After an all night of prayer, he called unto him those who were willing to be known as his disciples; and from them he selected twelve, "that they should be with him; and that he might send them forth to preach." They were "unlearned and ignorant men:" the learning of that day bewildered and confused rather than strengthened the

mind, being a cultivation of taste more than an acquisition of knowledge. They were not men of station and influence; but from the lower ranks of society. The aim of our Lord was the poor: he would begin at the bottom, and build upward. His chosen twelve came from the mass; and were not above association with the common people. They were capable and honest witnesses; his gospel was to owe its extension not to learning or worldly influence; but to the simple truth honestly proclaimed. Most of them had been disciples of John; they may not have been converted men at the time of their selection; but they were willing to forsake all in order to follow Jesus; and to put themselves under his tuition, to be used by him in the accomplishment of his mission, which they continued to the end to believe to be the emancipation of the nation from the Roman yoke; and its exaltation to the high position assigned to the church of the future by the prophets, whose predictions they believed to be on the eve of fulfilment. To us it is plain that no error was committed in the choice of Judas, who finally became the most effective witness of all to the divinity of his master.

Their stated attendance was required from the beginning of that stage of the ministry, which was marked by the daily occurrence of miracles. They had been chosen for the purpose of seeing all the mighty works, and hearing all the words of instruction. They were present also at all the contests with the various classes of the opposition; and lived more in the short period of their training than others do in years. Their experience was crowded with occurrences, the full writing of which would burden the world. To them he opened himself fully, cultivating the closest familiarity, admitting them to his most private life, and discoursing with them at length on all subjects pertaining to man's duty and destiny.

After his resurrection he did not talk much with them; there was on their part the reserve of awe; and on his part that of elevation; and we might have expected a similar reserve on his part throughout his ministry; they were so slow of understanding, so dull in their receptivity; so questioning in their unbelief; that to tolerate their

companionship must have been to him a continual hardship. But with the utmost gentleness and forbearance he endured them; exposed himself in all his attitudes to their keenest scrutiny; listened to all their difficulties; condescended to all their weaknesses; and never withdrew himself from their society. The child-like simplicity of his character was transparent to their view. They saw him not at a distance, but close at hand, amid contradiction, contempt and persecution, still unfaltering, loving to the end. They saw him when he was "abhorred of the nation," "despised and rejected of men," "acquainted with grief," and visited with the direst vengeance, which earth and hell could wreak upon his innocent head; and the sole response was "intercession made for the transgressors."

They had companied with him about a year of high experience, before he asked their conclusions respecting his personality, "whom do men say that I, the son of man, am? and whom say ye that I am?" They had been taught of God to discern that he was the son of the living God. "Flesh and blood had not revealed it to them." An inward teaching had opened to them an interpretation of the mighty works as indicating a power not derived but inherent; a wisdom transcending inspiration; and a purity unblemished by corruption. A mirror may receive the discoloring breath; but cannot be tarnished by it: the serpent had breathed on him; but the tarnish of sin was not on him. Even Judas concurred in this judgment, as his dying testimony proved. In this expression of belief they were most heartily sincere, as the Savior's commendation determines.

The eleven were at this stage converted men by faith in the son of God; and the group formed a most loving and happy family. He called them his "sheep," his "friends," his "children," his "little children" dearer to him than mother, or sister, or brother. Indeed he describes his affection for them as greater than can be told; "as the Father loveth me, even so love I you." They loved him better than all the world, were willing to surrender all for him, to go to prison and death with him; and did in fact give their lives for him. Their association was a miniature of heaven.

The atmosphere about him was love. They kissed him at parting and returning, were permitted even to embrace him, and take all the liberties of the most endeared friendship. Their own loving consent alone retained them in attendance. The bond that united them was confidence in him as God's righteous servant appointed to perform a work impossible to all others.

Their faith received all possible helps. Proofs of his absolute divinity were granted to them, which were withheld from others. When the charge, made against him by the Pharisees of complicity with Satan, was taken up by the people generally, and urged against him; it was refuted to the disciples by a miracle not witnessed by the crowd. As they sailed across the sea of Galilee, with the master sunken into a depth of slumber from utter exhaustion, lying upon the quarterdeck upon a board and pillow, a storm of wind surprised them in mid passage. It came upon them so suddenly, that it caught them with sails spread and hatches open. The repose of the sleeper was undisturbed by the roar of the tempest, and the rattling of the cordage in taking in sail, and the hurried exertions to lay the ship to, which is the only recourse in such perils. It proved impossible to bring its nose to the wind; and it lay in the trough of the sea, the waves breaking over it. The disciples came to him, and aroused him with the stab of a question: "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" by being driven on the rocks.

The skies could sooner fall than one hair of their head perish; but he arose in the face of the storm, and stood where old mariners could not stand without clinging. The elements knew him. He spoke but two words: "Peace, be still," and in briefer time than the most well-trained and intelligent animal could do its master's bidding the wind held its breath; and the sea rested from its fury, and smoothed itself into a sea of glass, as it were. There was a great calm. The disciples knew then that of a truth he was the Son of God; let the enemies devise what slanders they would, to explain the mighty works. Men nowhere feel their helpless dependence as they do when tossed upon the angry floods. It is

God alone who rules the raging sea, and says to the proud waves: "Hitherto and no farther."

On another occasion, he came upon them in the fourth watch of the night, as they were toiling in rowing against an angry sea; and showed himself an absolute master of the elements. The boisterous sea bore him up as a solid floor; and the contrary wind did in nowise retard his movement, for he could easily have passed and distanced them, notwithstanding their most vigorous efforts. The sight of him, like a pursuing spirit, fearfully alarmed them; but his reassuring voice at once calmed their fears. That his walking upon the sea was not effected by changing the qualities of matter, was demonstrated by his allowing Peter to perform the same feat; which he succeeded in doing, so long as his eye was fixed upon the Lord of the sea. But when his fears prevailed, he was in immediate danger of being swallowed by the opening deep. Our Lord's object evidently was to afford to them the most unquestionable evidence of his divinity by proofs not vouchsafed to others.

So, when cavilers clamored for a sign from heaven; such a sign was granted not to the skeptics; but to the disciples, of whom the favored three heard the testimony of heaven at the baptism repeated, got a glimpse of the holy company of the redeemed, and heard them ascribe their salvation to the blood-shedding on Calvary. The sign, which the incredulous demanded, was granted to the disciples; and nothing was withheld, which could conduce to the strengthening of their faith.

Familiarity with him in the intimacies of life demonstrated to them from day to day his knowledge of all things present and future. When he sent Peter to the sea for a shekel in the mouth of the first fish; when he sent two of them for the colt on which he would enter Jerusalem in triumph; and two to procure a room in which to make ready the passover; and probably in all his arrangements; he was affording continual proof of his omniscience. So, in their private conversations, they had no need to ask him a question; he heard the beating of their hearts; and replied with the most startling directness to their very

thoughts. Thus constantly exercising the inalienable prerogatives of the deity, he was affording them every confirmation, which the most exacting caviler could ask; just as he afterwards multiplied to them proofs of his resurrection. Absolute certainty was demanded in this case; and it was afforded: the last year of his ministry was especially devoted to this object. Even the hard, unsympathizing Judas was more than convinced.

Yet their appreciation of his exalted personality was very deficient. Had they understood it, they would never have been in panic for fear of going to the bottom of the lake of Galilee with him on board the vessel; they would never have grudged the ointment in the house of Bethany; all the powers of earth combined could not have forced them to forsake him in peril, and flee and deny him; James and John, sons of Zebedee, would have vied with the ten for the honor of hanging, one on his right hand and the other on his left, upon Roman crosses. Evidences more than satisfactory, were continually before them; but their apprehension of them was very fluctuating. Their faith was very weak. They misinterpreted the object of his mission with a mistake, which nothing but the result could correct. Divinity was not expected in their national liberator and hero; nor was it necessary to the accomplishment of his work: it was an inexplicable adjunct in the real Jesus, against which Jewish preconceptions ever demurred. His predictions of his coming death were also continually undermining their faith in his divinity; so that their minds must have been on the balance between conflicting opinions.

This dullness and lack of receptivity is very apparent in the history of the farewell conversation in John chs. xiv, xv, xvi. When our Lord spoke of going away and leaving them, he was met by the question: "Lord we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?" showing that the idea of his going away by death had not found a lodgment in their minds. What gross misconception is shown by the request "Lord, show us the Father; and it sufficeth us!" Clearly they had no conception of spiritual discoveries, and of a spiritual kingdom. How patiently and lovingly our Lord explained; and yet they went out of

that upper room without the least apprehension, that he was going to betrayal, arrest, and death. The progress made by them in learning was astonishingly small.

Notwithstanding prolonged intimacy with the most powerful and transforming character, that ever moved on earth, they were far from imbibing his spirit: they were still in favor of violent methods of procedure; they still felt the Jewish exclusiveness, leading them to forbid to others the privileges, which themselves enjoyed; they were to the last contending for the highest position. They also showed a great lack of sympathy with him at his arrest and trial: while he agonized, they slept; when he was taken and bound, they fled.

It had often been argued among them, can he be overcome, and die; and yet be divine? Can his enemies prevail against him, and drive him out of his own world; and yet he be Lord of all things, as we can but believe? It was an axiom self-evident to enemies and friends, that being God, he could not be vulnerable nor mortal. The ultimate test, by which the decision of the nation was rendered against him, was that he was defeated and died by the hands of his enemies. This settled the question of his divinity, and settled it against him. For this reason, all that he had said upon the subject of his own death had failed to make any impression upon the memories of his disciples more than rain upon the solid rock. In proportion as their appreciation of his divinity was clear and well-founded; in that proportion was their confidence in his superiority to death, which as the fruit of sin could have no connection whatever with him.

After the arrest Peter followed to see the end, expecting an issue favorable to the master; and this confidence clung to them after he was condemned and nailed to the cross. They looked for deliverance; and no deliverance came: their eyes failed with longing; and no help appeared. When he died, their hopes died with him, and were buried in his tomb. They did not call to mind how often and with what emphasis the prediction of this very ending had been made. Though none remonstrated after the fearful rebuke administered to Peter at Cesarea Philippi; yet

they had heard these predictions with inward demur; and listened only to the siren music of their own eager hopes. Hence the crucifixion of their Lord seemed to dissipate their confidence entirely. The terrible end came upon them like the crack of doom. The Jewish council, like a wild beast long cheated of its prey, and roused into an ungovernable fury by the goading of the sharp sword of his mouth, were in a white heat of excitement at the prospect of destroying their enemy. If he could be arrested, he could also be put to death: and the onset upon him and his band, successful in its first assault, gained tenfold force from the prospect of victory. Human passion never ran so high: the human will was never clothed with such power of rebellion: never rose with so desperate determination. A frenzy worthy of the pit reigned in human bosoms.

The first rush of the torrent swept the disciples off their feet, confounded all their reasonings, and stranded them on the rocks of despair. The storm burst upon them like the devastating cyclone unawares. The conflict in their minds between their matured belief in the divinity of their leader, and the unavoidable conclusions from his defeat and death were soul-harrowing. In the light of Calvary, their former convictions seemed untenable; it had become necessary to review and correct too hastily formed opinions by the result. "We trusted that it had been he" expressed the whole they dared to hope. Friends and enemies supposed that they had seen the end: and opinions gravitated downwards.

The disciples had seen an unaccountable change in their master. They had seen him in Gethsemane overcome with inexplicable anguish: weakened and reduced by inward conflict, until the strength of ordinary manhood was no longer in him: they had seen him bound and led away unresisting whom they had thought no hand could touch without being instantly paralyzed; they had seen him mocked, spitted on, smitten, even nailed to the cross; while the rack had been made to wrench the bones out of their joints. Instead of deliverance came the dire complaint that God had forsaken him; and when challenged to come down

from the cross, he still hung and died forsaken of God and man, and derided as the prince of malefactors.

To the disciples he was yet "a prophet mighty in word and deed before God and all the people;" but their faith in his divinity was shaken. "All ye shall be offended because of me this night," was the true description of them. They were verging toward apostasy. If the devil was not permitted to use his sieve to their overthrow; they were almost within the suck of the cataract; Jesus had prayed for them and they escaped; but they accumulated materials for future self-knowledge; and gained telescopic views of the great adversary and his operations beyond the reach of the unassisted eye. A more effective preparation for their immediate work cannot be named; it was the climax of their education.

A singular paralysis had affected their memory. At his arrest his simple look would have been sufficient to defeat it, had he willed. He submitted as the stronger party, dictating terms of surrender, by which they were exempted from intended seizure; the resetting of the ear of Malchus showed that his power was not in the least abridged; the convulsion of nature when he died proved, that all the forces of the seen and unseen would have moved to deliver him had he consented; but all this was forgotten in their panic. For they were evidently overwhelmed with mental terror.

The undertaking in which they were engaged, was, as they understood it, a rebellion against the established powers, and an attempt at their overturn. The sight of these worldly powers rising in their hostile might against them, now standing in the fore-front as the visible principals in the revolutionary movement, drove them into a panic. The leader, who should have borne the brunt, was gone; and they found themselves exposed to the whole fury of the storm, which had been long rising and was now bursting. Such an overthrow of hopes, for which all had been sacrificed, and such a danger, whose terror had not been realized before, sunk them into a despondency which carried them to the very bottom. They had been so deceived, that they would not listen to any thing more on

the subject; they rejected evidence. They had been so misled and put in jeopardy, that they closed their hearts against any further appeal. The utterness of their delusion added to the strength of the determination to hear no more. While they by no means abjured the name of the Nazarene, they were bent on abandoning the cause which they had so zealously espoused. They could not be moved to any further advance; a palsy had seized them. All agreed with determined unanimity, and adhered to their position with an unconquerable tenacity.

It was vain that Mary Magdalene insisted that she had seen the Lord, and recognized his unmistakable voice; one when alone can be easily deceived. In vain the company of several women added their testimony to having seen him, heard him, and touched his feet; they were but women, and easily imposed on. In vain the two from Emmaus related their walk with him, and their assurance that his death and resurrection were clearly foretold in their scriptures, as he had convinced their burning hearts. "All seemed to them as idle tales; and they believed them not," being fully determined to follow no misleading light farther into the swamps of delusion.

Nothing short of ocular demonstration had power to stir them, or create the smallest ripple in their souls. Thomas could not be satisfied with this; he would not believe his own eyes and ears. He had known instances of the deception of the senses of sight and hearing; and he would demand the fullest evidence that could be given; he would explore with his own finger the wounds in the hands and the feet, and thrust his whole hand into the deep spear gash in his side; and then there could be no mistake. These men were honest, but the spirit of the most exacting scepticism was in them: once deceived, they would never be deceived again. As usual with the Lord Jesus, he granted all the proof, which the most stubborn unbelief could ask.

While the resurrection of their master brought a flood of light into the minds of the eleven, it was his visible ascension to the skies that removed the beam entirely out of their eyes, and transformed them into apostles. They

saw for the first time that his metropolis was not to be Jerusalem; but the right hand of the Father; that his kingdom was not to be Judea, but the world; that every creature under heaven was to be embraced under his spiritual rule; that the Father, Son and Holy Ghost are three equal persons in a Trinity, whose names they then heard for the first time associated. When they once understood the great scheme, of which they had been unadvised spectators; and felt the grandeur of the mighty undertaking worthy of the self-sacrifice of him, whom they now realized to be God in the highest, supremest sense, they could not contain themselves.

Each one, appalled at his own unbelief and treason second only to that of Judas, forgot all contests for the preëminence, in desire to be the least and humblest of the company. Condemning themselves with the most sweeping severity, they enforced the requirements of their master with a vigor passing the bounds of reason. They interpreted literally the injunction, "sell all that thou hast and give to the poor," refusing to call anything which they possessed their own. They obeyed the command "follow me" by taking the path, that led surely to the cross or the block. Not that they unwisely courted opposition; they acted with a wisdom, a tact, a tenderness, and a courage which have ever been the admiration of the world. Their highest glory was the call to suffer shame and loss for their master's sake.

The authors of the gospels have so hidden themselves behind their master, that we can scarcely define their distinctive individuality; of like tenor was all their preaching; they preached not themselves but their Lord; and took pleasure in reproaches and distresses for his sake. With a courage of a quality before unknown, they evangelized the world; until in less than three centuries Rome assumed the hated name. In their inmost souls was a shrine luminous ever with the memory of the Holy One, where the spirit of God kept the fire continually burning and the light ever blazing.

These men certainly went through the greatest and most extreme vicissitudes of emotion ever experienced. From

the altitude of the highest wordly hopes, they were plunged most suddenly into the profoundest mire of despair; a despair which took away the breath of their spirits. Out of this they at length emerged into a higher life than has ever since been vouchsafed to mortals. They sit upon thrones above all the tribes of earth. Those of them who are the authors of our gospels have each recited the history and experience of his own soul, in reaching the conviction of the supreme deity of Jesus of Nazareth, a conviction which the candid reader can but adopt.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE ASCENSION.

The ascension probably occurred on the first day of the week, the Christian Sabbath; that being the day selected by the Savior for his appearances and meetings with his disciples. His repeated use of this day secured its recognition as the Sabbath of the future under the name of Lord's day. To his own example the sanctity of an express command may have been added, though we are left to infer this only from the order instituted in the early Christian church. A single expression in the history confirms this opinion of the day of the ascension: "he led them out as far as Bethany; and they returned from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a Sabbath day's journey." He ascended from the eastern side of Olivet, from some spot secluded from observation, and within the limits of Sabbath travel.

The departure of their master seems to have been entirely unexpected by the twelve, though it had been predicted in the Psalms, lxxviii: 18, and had been obscurely alluded to at least once by our Lord himself, John vi: 62; yet their attention had never been expressly called to it: and when it occurred, it came upon them unawares, surprising them by its suddenness, and overwhelming them by the sadness of the final parting without an adieu, in which their full hearts could have found some relief. Affection demands the privilege of its farewell; and finds a satisfaction in a tearful separation, when iron destiny demands it; and hearts are to be sundered, that beat as one. The visible ascension was a very necessary factor in the work of Christ; and it had a greater influence in enlightening and moulding his followers than any other single occurrence of his ministry.

1. It destroyed the last vestige of a hope of an earthly kingdom in the minds of the disciples. This expectation had animated them in their allegiance to the Nazarene from the beginning. In the estimation of a Jew religion and patriotic feeling were connected, the prosperity of their nation being always connected with their religious faithfulness. The twelve had associated for the liberation of their people, as well as for the restoration of a pure religion. The hope of it adhered to them to the very last; "we trusted that it had been he, that should have delivered Israel." Even after the resurrection, the great question with them was: "Lord wilt thou at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?" It might well have been expected that such anticipations should root themselves in the heart of a Jew; as all the wonderful predictions of the victories, aggrandizement and glory of the church in the latter days stand in the Old Testament as promises made to "Zion," "Jerusalem," "Israel," and the throne and Kingdom of "David." Examples of this kind are Is. ix: 7 "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his Kingdom; to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever." Is. xl: 18. It is said to "Zion," "lift up thine eyes round about, and behold; all these gather themselves together and came to thee. As I live, saith the Lord, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all as with an ornament, and "bind them on thee as a bride doeth." The nations would be added to the Jewish church.

These are by no means scattered descriptions; but in reading in our days the writings of the prophets, it is necessary to substitute in the place of Zion or Jerusalem to which the promises are made, the name of the Christian church. This being the constant tenor of the Jewish scriptures, a Jew could hardly be expected to understand them in the gentile sense. No conviction ever got deeper hold of men's minds in all the history of mind, than did this of the inalienable privileges of Israel, possess the minds of the apostles. The glowing imagery of prophecy to them painted, in all the delineations of the Messiah's kingdom, the future glory of Israel: and to contradict this deep-seated presenti-

ment was in the estimation of the mass of the nation indeed revoltingly criminal; it was treason politically and crime religiously. To the apostles possessed of such misconceptions, it appeared that their master's cause demanded his personal attendance on the earth; and when they saw him take his leave of the world, and withdraw his bodily presence to the world of glory, the whole fabric of their "kingdom" vanished. Nothing less than ocular demonstration could have corrected their misapprehensions. Indeed notwithstanding this visible proof, such was the vitality of their national bigotry, that it required time for them to accommodate themselves to the entirely new order of things.

But it dawned upon them in the hour of their master's departure that the Jewish throne would never be rebuilt: that the sceptre had departed from Judah forever, and the lawgiver from between his feet. The nation had rejected Jesus, and he had rejected them. They had never been more unitedly and bitterly agreed about any one thing, than that they would not have this man to reign over them; and thus had decided their own worldly future. The sight of their ascending master disabused the minds of these favored twelve of their unwarranted scheme of an earthly royalty, whose offices they had often in anticipation divided among themselves, and to which they had clung notwithstanding all his teachings in correction of their fancies. While this was a sad overthrow of their worldly plans and hopes, it was also an emancipation.

It gave them an understanding for the first time of the real nature of the kingdom which he was to establish. He was still a king, in the language of their Scriptures, "the king of glory." They were able to define the nature of his rule by what they were conscious of in their own souls. He was king of hearts, and his dominion was a spiritual empire, as much superior to a sublunary monarchy, as heaven is higher than the earth. His throne is to be the heart of humanity; and his reign the theocracy, unlike that of the wilderness, in that its jurisdiction should extend over all the nations of mankind.

In order to found a kingdom, the first requisite is a king, whose superiority shall command the admiration, the hon-

age and the obedience of all; who can be loved and trusted, and whom it is a privilege to obey; whom the instinct of a nation detects among the shifting characters which attract public attention; to whom adverse circumstances yield; and hostile surroundings are made to do homage. Such a one, when found, is the foundation of the people. There was never such a victor as Jesus of Nazareth. He came off conqueror out of the clouds of deepest darkness, that ever enveloped any with their Stygian shades. Out of apparent defeat he snatched the victory. Seemingly overborne by the powers of earth and hell, he suffered them to do their worst, to discharge against him the deadliest venom of their poison, and enduring without a murmur, having loved the world, he loved it to the end, and in dying, saved his enemies.

Few have been found worthy of the title to an earthly throne; one there is who has proved his claim to the throne of universal dominion. The great weapon by which he conquers is love: he heaps coals of fire upon the heads of enemies, and burns their enmity entirely out. His kingdom is the kingdom of love; his law the law of love; his subjects are bound to him by ties stronger than those that bind worlds to their sun; his throne is the submissive soul.

His kingdom is an invisible kingdom, but only the more real and forceful on that account. He can be ever with his people, though unseen. He says to them that serve him: "lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." The best and dearest friends cannot say this; they are torn asunder and separated; so that none can have the comforting assurance of their aid beyond the present hour. But this King is ever with those that trust him. Nothing "can separate, not death or life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come." He is with his people, not as Jehovah was with his Israel in a pillar of cloud and of fire; but inwardly and truly in their hearts' most holy place as his temple. In the holy of holies of the soul where none other can enter, there this king abides as in his chosen dwelling; and there he holds communion with them from off the mercy seat.

He is the more really present with them for being absent from the world. He can at any time or place manifest himself unto them as he does not to the world. When Stephen was in a crowd of murderers, Jesus manifested himself to him, and not to the world of opposers about him. He was present to Paul's spiritual perception not only on the road to Damascus; but in the temple, to send him away from the machinations of his enemies; in the dungeon of Philippi; on the sea, when "all hope that we should be saved was taken away." And when he stood before Nero, and "no one stood with him; but all men forsook him;" then Jesus was present as if visibly standing at his side. As he was present walking with the three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace; so he has been really in every fire at the stake that has ever consumed a Christian martyr. The angel in whom is the divine name has made his presence felt in many a den of lions, and under many a juniper tree; and never have his sympathy and succor been more ready and more effective than after the heavens received him out of our sight.

The most astonishing feature of this kingdom had been just revealed to them and to the world in the words of the great commission which had just fallen from the lips of the ascending conqueror. It was open to every creature under heaven. It is to be universal in its reach, extending to every human being its privileges and advantages. While the sublimity and glory of the plan almost staggered their understanding, its unheard of novelty expanded their souls with affections and responsibilities hitherto unfelt by mortals. The world has named the Macedonian "great" not in consideration of his deeds of prowess merely, but on account of his mighty aspirations. It has never ceased to admire him weeping at the conviction of the existence of other worlds than this, and regretting with tears that he had not yet conquered one. The ambition of universal empire has never entered the dreams of more than the fewest of earth's heroes. With Jesus it was not a dream. As Napoleon said, the idea has never been actualized but by the Nazarene. The Jewish institution was the diminutive bud opening just then into

the magnificent flower, that should fill the world with its life-restoring fragrance. The forces were just then being loosed which should leaven human society. Though the church afterward showed itself backward in entering upon the work of the conversion of the world: yet the mighty thought then took full possession of the favored twelve; and elevated them from narrow and exclusive bigots into apostles and missionaries to the race.

The greatest prophets, Moses, Isaiah and Daniel, were not more overcome by the glory of the visions and revelations vouchsafed, than were these twelve simple-minded Jews at the truth now first announced to the world, and dawning upon them like the sun in its rising. The men, who once forbade a disciple to use the name of Jesus, because he followed not with them, and who would not eat with men of another nation, were now moving with sympathies wide as the race. This kingdom offered to all liberation, not from Roman oppression; it had no conflict with any established authority; but from the power of sin, whose bondage is more cruel, and whose service is attended with all possible calamities, of which it is indeed the parent and source. The plan of such a dominion was never originated in the mind of a creature.

The idea of a kingdom superior to all established governments, yet not conflicting with any, but rather contributing to their stability, capable of uniting the whole world of mankind in loving loyalty to one supreme ruler, and binding the whole humanity into one great brotherhood by a tie infinitely stronger than that of consanguinity; and demonstrating its practicability wherever its forces are permitted free action, is too grand a conception to have ever been born in the mind of an ephemeron like man. The very conception stamps its author divine. It is not the fancy of a wild enthusiasm; but is developing before the eyes of the world into "the kingdom of heaven;" and will yet make this earth a miniature of the world of glory. Those, who saw the movement in the feebleness of its beginning, might have had more reason to doubt of its success, than we who are beholding the developments of the

present era; when its forces, freed from the limitations of the past, are marshaling for the conquest of the world.

In constructing this kingdom, the building is carried from the bottom upward. The foundation is laid among the poor, the ignorant, even the outcast and the vile. The gospel is preached to the poor, who comprise ninety-nine hundredths of the population every where. Our Lord, through his whole life, identified himself with the poor; he disregarded altogether the distinctions of rank and station; his teachings were level to the comprehension of the poor; the subjects of his miracles were almost without exception poor; he chose his disciples from the poor; the blessings of his gospel are evidently suited to the condition of the poor, of whom ancient civilization said: "*Odi profanum vulgus et arceo.*" It cannot be denied that among this class are found more genuine sympathy, mutual helpfulness, and unaffected kindness of feeling, than among the more favored ranks of society; and that they are more open to heavenly influences. Any movement, that would touch the great heart of humanity, and sweep the race, must of necessity begin with the lower strata of society.

Who has taught the world this? Whence have we learned this profound lesson? From Jesus Christ and from no other source. When political science makes progress, and after ages of experiment the principles of just and equitable government are unfolded; and new forms of administration take the place of effete systems; and the world makes evident advance; the boast is made of new discoveries and of new light added to the world's intelligence. But we may look back and see, that all these discoveries are contained in the words of the Nazarene, and that they have emanated from him. The leaven of his teachings has been working slowly; but it is inspiring the world to-day. The germs of all that can conduce to the amelioration of society, the reformation of abuses, and the salvation of the world, are to be found in his gospel.

III. The ascension enlarged to boundless dimensions their views of their master's personality and work. It is impossible to form a proper estimate of our Lord's personality, unless we have suitable and correct views of the

work which he accomplished. A lack of such understanding lies at the bottom of all Arianism, Socinianism and like errors. He, who limits the mission of Christ to that of a mere teacher come from God to show us certain moral truths, or give us an example of invincible love, can but find his estimate of the personality of the great messenger correspondingly dwarfed. He can but ask, why the need of the presence of the supreme lawgiver himself among men, if this was all that the necessities of the situation demanded? If, however, we assign to him the great work of redeeming lost souls from the bondage of sin, and its unending retributions, by an atoning sacrifice that shall sustain the honor of the divine law; by a full equivalent for their remitted punishment: this work demands the utmost interference of the Most High himself in person; and it becomes impossible to exaggerate the dignity and excellence of the redeemer.

The opinions respecting his person necessarily vary according to men's estimate of his work. Thus while his immediate followers limited his work to the mere emancipation of a single nation from the insufferable tyranny of Rome; it was impossible for them to form a correct judgment of his personality. They professed indeed to receive him as the Son of God; the testimony before them admitted of no less, but absolutely demanded this confession: but the title is susceptible of various significations. The angel Gabriel at the annunciation used it of his simple humanity: "that holy thing, that shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God." The designation in the mouths of the apostles may have meant, only that God was with him in some mysterious and unexplained connection. In its highest sense it is applied to the second person of the uncreated three; and in this sense the apostles could say for the first time, that he whom they had attended, was the Son of God in the full latitude of its meaning. None of them ever called him God until after his resurrection; but now the last scale had fallen from their eyes, that obstructed a proper estimate of his real person; and

a large scale it was, almost a cataract, when their minds were disabused of their narrow Jewish notions of a temporal deliverer.

They awoke suddenly to the full realization of his supreme divinity; and he was gone. They had companied with him three years in the most intimate society, and had not known him. Moses had feared to look upon him revealed in the burning bush; Isaiah had almost fallen into despair at sight of him upon a throne high and lifted up; Daniel had fainted before him and been sick many days; but they had gone in and out with him in the most endeared companionship, and had not known him. They had eaten and drunk with him, and had such fellowship as only the dearest and most trusted friends have, and had not known him. How they desired to see again one of the days of the son of man! but they were gone. How they desired to hear again the things which prophets and kings desired to hear! but the unappreciated opportunity was past.

IV. Their faith had been wavering and irregular. It had required two years of observation, and one of close intimacy to convince them, that he was indeed the Son of God. On numberless occasions they had received well-merited rebuke for their unbelief, and had even grieved him until he exclaimed: "How long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?" Their views of him were always low and unworthy, and they had no proper understanding of his power and readiness to help them. When Satan desired to "have them, that he might sift them as wheat," their faith might have failed altogether, had not the master prayed that such might not be. In that dreadful night they were "offended because of him." His arrest and seeming weakness in the hands of his enemies almost drove their wavering minds to adverse conclusions respecting him. Two of the company, though neither of them an apostle, on the way to Emmaus, spoke of him as a "prophet mighty in word and deed." A *prophet*, indeed. This was almost an entire lapse of faith in him as the Son of God.

There was sufficient evidence of his divinity before the mind of Judas, much more of Peter, and James, and John; but their faith wavered. Had they known, as they knew

later, who and what he was, they would never have forsaken him and fled; Peter would never have denied him. They would never have left him to die alone, without the succor of their presence. When our friends are gone past recall, busy memory pierces the very soul with harrowing recollections of instances of ingratitude and unkindness on our part, now past correction. Much room for self-accusation was there indeed in this case; and Peter's bitter tears and agonized repentance were only an example of what they all suffered.

They had believed that he "came out from God;" that there was a living sympathy between him and the Father; but their confidence required continual verification. Jno. xvi: 30: "By this we believe that thou camest forth from God." Every miracle had aided their faith, which indeed needed such constant aid. Jno. ii: 11. "This did Jesus and manifested forth his glory, and his disciples believed on him." Matt. xiv: 33. "They," the disciples, "came and worshiped him, saying: "Of a truth thou art the Son of God." But while they had seen the "works of God" daily wrought before their eyes, and had daily heard a wisdom higher than inspiration sounding in their ears, a wisdom greater than Solomon's, as eternity is above time, a wisdom more astounding than all his mighty works, their views had been very defective and short of the truth. They had fondly believed that "God was with him;" now they saw that himself was the original and source of the power whose displays had eclipsed all the wonders of old; that this power was not derived or delegated, but appertained to his personality. They knew at length that the unfathomable wisdom of eternity was in him as its storehouse; that himself was the wisdom of God, and the power of God, and the almighty love of God.

The human soul can entertain no higher thought than of God; it overfills all our capacities of conception; and overstrains our imagination; and then comes short by millions of angel knowledge. Those bright spirits, who with strong immortal eyes saw him ages ago hang this world upon nothing, and adjust by a single touch the movements which it has since observed, know how little of him! He is

past finding out. All this and infinitely more Jesus of Nazareth was, "God manifest in the flesh."

There never was on earth a company more intensely excited by deep and conflicting emotions, than that which stood somewhere upon the eastern slope of Olivet on that memorable Sabbath day. The loud weeping could not check the fervent exultation of the hour. The pang of separation which we all know, as we have felt it by the couch of death, the bitter agonies of a repentance like to tear the heart asunder, the triumphant recognition of the God, the awe and fear always accompanying the knowledge of his presence, the joy of hailing the victor over death, hell, and the grave, and sin, the mighty outburst of a faith near akin to sight, all had their unrestrained utterance in that wild tumult of feeling. Self-government and self-control there was none. Feelings incapable of check forced their expression, and hurried the actors off their balance; utterly unforeseen as the departure was. His hands were even yet stretched out in blessing them, and the words were warm on his lips, when at once the clay tabernacle put on its spiritual form and aspect; a more than transfiguration light shone in his countenance; and he began slowly to ascend towards his throne in the skies. They looked, they knelt, they fell on their faces, and the words of his blessing were still lighting upon their heads, when a passing pillar of cloud received him out of their sight; while each of them felt the strength of a great multitude in his own individual soul. Their memory of him became as strong as sight. Their hearts had received his words as the sea receives treasures cast into it, capable of being all recovered without loss or damage; as the withered fingers of the mummy hold the grains of wheat deposited in them three thousand years ago, yet capable of growth.

The passing cloud brought them all to their feet; and as they stood gazing steadfastly up to heaven, they became conscious of the presence of others. Two men in shining garments were at hand, who informed them that this was the end of their master's abode with them in the flesh; but at the close of the dispensation he would so come again as they had seen him go. The cloud may possibly have been

a retinue of glorious angels come to accompany him on his return to the throne. And then doubtless was fulfilled the scripture recorded in the 24th Psalm. As the heavenly escort approached the battlements of heaven, the call was made, "lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors; and the king of glory shall come in." From within comes the demand, "Who is this king of glory?" And the answer is returned, "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle." He is just returning from the battle against hell and sin; where he has been in his own person contending against the evil powers in a long and bloody contest, in which he has shown himself superior to all the power of the enemy, and is returning in triumph. Then again follows the refrain: "lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors; and the king of glory shall come in."

The day is hastening on when he shall come as he went: "the time is short" himself has said. He shall come "in the clouds of heaven, seated on the right hand of power and all the holy angels with him." They were with him when he ascended, but not visible to mortal eyes. He shall come in his glory: his throne the incommunicable attributes of deity.

As at Sinai the trumpet aroused the sleeping host of Israel, and summoned them to the mount, so in the day of his coming he will as archangel by trumpet and by voice arouse the sleeping dead, who shall come forth; "and every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him." Indeed they will see nothing else: one sight will engross every soul. "And I saw a great white throne and him who sat upon it from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead small and great stand before God; and the books were opened:" the book of memory, the book of conscience and the book of the law and "the dead were judged out of the things written in the books" "and another book was opened which was the book of life" i. e. of Christian experience.

His ascension is a pattern of our own. Every fact connected with him is a doctrine. As he rose so shall we: as

he ascended we shall follow. When he shall say: "Come, ye blessed of my father," earth will no longer hold us down: we shall no longer belong to this world. The liberty of the universe will be ours. Our father's house contains many mansions, which may be open to our visitation and inspection. Even should the remodeled earth become the abode of the saints, yet it shall no longer be a prison of confinement. The task of declaring the unutterable love of God, and telling the old, old story of the cross to races yet uncreated, and deterring them from the first allurements of temptation, may be committed to these tried spirits that have known good and have also known evil.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE INTERCESSION OF CHRIST.

The active interference of the Savior in behalf of men by no means ceased with his withdrawal from the earth: as it did not commence with his incarnation. To him it ever belongs to direct the application of his atoning merits to individuals; and to arrange the course of his church onward to the stage of universal victory. For the accomplishment of this great purpose "all power is given to him in heaven and in earth" from the beginning. At the same time it is true, that we know less of this than of any other part of his work. It is carried on beyond our sight; within the veil of flesh and blood; and of what is transacted there, we can form no adequate conception. As it had been impossible for man to have imagined before hand the course and method of his ministry on earth; so it is equally beyond our power to describe the method of his intercession in heaven. It is sufficient for us to know that his intercession is as real, as necessary, and as effectual, as his atonement, of which it is the completion.

From the slight glimpses afforded in the word of God, we can with certainty determine a few things connected with it, and enjoy the consolation connected with them, without trespassing beyond what is written. More easy is it for infancy to comprehend age, than for us to enter into the comprehension of the things, which God has hidden in the holy of holies of the universe, whither Christ has for us entered.

1. Intercession depends on affection. It is made only for those whose welfare is as dear to us as our own souls. The Lord mentions Noah, Daniel and Job as three men whose prayers have been offered as fervently for others, as for themselves. They are signal examples of prevailing prayer. Noah, moved by intimations of coming judgment like the

trumpet blast before the deadly onset, felt thus deeply for those of his own house rather than for others: Daniel interceded for his three fellow captives, unified by a common lot: and Job's own personal acceptance seems to have been connected with his forgiveness of the three who had come as friends to comfort him; and set themselves up as judges to condemn him. Not these alone are the only instances named in the scriptures of such effectual intercession.

In Abraham's prayer for guilty Sodom, we hear still the tenderness and importunity of the pleadings in the very words spoken. Daniel's prayer given in his ninth chapter is similar. He confesses the sins of his people, as though their guilt were his own; and himself had been the transgressor; and makes not one petition for himself in the whole prayer; but his soul is consumed with desire for Israel, and the holy mountain of our God. Our hearts thrill at the reading of it still. Likewise the prayer of Moses for Israel after their idolatry at the foot of Sinai stands almost unapproachable in its high unselfishness, and holy zeal for Jehovah's honor, in the fulfillment of his promises to the people. He would sooner be blotted out of God's book of worldly inheritance than see the promises to Israel unfulfilled. When God suggested to him his own personal aggrandizement, he repelled the idea, and insisted upon the verification of God's word to the people.

These cases show that intercessory prayer demands not only affection: but the strongest that the human breast ever feels, and of the highest and most unselfish quality. This affection, occasionally developed in the choicest spirits of earth, but never permanently residing in a human heart, burst in the soul of Jesus from its unfathomable depths, like a fountain whose streams flow with grace and truth. Intercessions to earthly kings and governors have been made only by the most intimate friends of the accused, whom nothing but the truest love could enlist.

Judah's application to the governor of Egypt for the release of his brother Benjamin can hardly be read to-day without tears; and we do not wonder that Joseph was overcome by it. The tale of Esther's approach to Ahasuerus will never lose its interest while hearts beat. To stand be-

side a prisoner and make his cause one's own, is what only the most genuine and devoted affection can do. It is to stand between offended authority and the criminal; and is the highest grade of devotion next to assuming the culprit's place as his substitute. Who shall stand thus between the august majesty of the universe, and his rebellious subjects? In whom moves there a love so deep, so genuine, so engrossing as to lead him to become an advocate and intercessor? Only the being who would die for sinners. Jesus Christ is our intercessor; as he is our redeemer, and substitute before the violated law.

2. His intercession began when man apostatized from God. When Adam sinned, the God, that hurled Satan and his angels down to the pit of everlasting woe for one transgression, must reject the human rebel as speedily, and as utterly. The same law, executed upon the former, demands the immediate expulsion of the latter. There is but one law, and one penalty for all intelligent creatures. God "cannot deny himself." This law is the expression of the uncreated attributes of the divinity concentrated into precept and penalty; and it is as unchangeable as the eternal throne. The question arose, will Jehovah adhere to his position; or recede, and open heaven to the returning spirits of the pit? To refrain from the punishment of men is to undo his own work, and abandon the immutable law, and give all license to evil. There never was a question in the heart of the holy one. Our first parents would have followed the fallen angels quickly to their doom; if an intercessor had not appeared in their behalf. The heavenly Father had suffered the loss of angels; the threatened additional loss of the race of man roused an infinite compassion, and led to an unheard-of effort. Jacob survived the loss of Joseph; but if Benjamin were taken also, he could not endure it, and live.

The bowels of everlasting mercy yearned over the lost; and an intercessor stepped forth from the midst of the throne. "Spare them," he said, "from going down to the pit, for I will find a ransom." How much will redeem them? Justice answered: Only a full equivalent for their eternal perdition in hell: I demand the uttermost farthing. Jesus says, Spare

them, I will pay it. Justice demands: When and where? Christ answers: In the fulness of time, on Calvary. The race of men were a unit in his sight, like the outcast infant in Ezek. xvi: 4-5-6. All men were contained in Adam as the trunk, branches, twigs and leaves are all in the one root. All humanity was in Adam, who begat a son in his own likeness; no longer in the image and likeness of God. The depraved infant representing the race was polluted in its blood, contaminated through and through. "It was cast out to the loathing of its person;" as we would cast out contagion or pestilence. God loathed it; heaven loathed it; "none eye pitied it." To regret the fall of man was allowable; but to pity seemed like taking sides with evil: we love at length those whom we pity; our hearts warm to them. This outcast babe was perishing without hope.

The last quarter from which to look for relief was the throne of immaculate purity. Yet in the very bosom of the trinity an intercessor for man was found. He who would listen to no interference in behalf of angels who sinned in their own persons, heard intercession for men who sinned in their progenitor. "Yea I said, unto thee live." The emphasis is on the pronoun "I." The suffering that would atone for the sin of Adam would avail for the race: and it required all the accumulated anguish of the son of God to redeem one sinner. It does not appear that for the forgiveness of additional crimes, a proportional increase of atoning sufferings would be demanded; but that which would satisfy the demands of justice for the one deliberate, intelligent apostasy of Adam, would avail for all the sins, which have sprung from it as a death-producing seed. And no less suffering would have been required in order to the liberation of a single transgressor.

Our Lord is called the "Counsellor" because the offering of himself as the atoning sacrifice for human sin, determined the action of the trinity in the case: and his counsel prevailed. The result will be, that no future race of creatures will ever lapse into rebellion. The mighty sacrifice, revealing as it does the inmost heart of God, will furnish motives that shall prevent the further incursion of sin.

3. The scriptures describe him as possessed of the most exquisite sympathy with his people, and love for sinners. No fuller and more tender sympathy can be described or conceived than is contained in the words: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me;" taken as the unexaggerated statement of a sympathy, the reality of which will yet, when fully revealed, astonish the universe, and lead friends and enemies to say: "Lord, when saw we *thee* an hungered and fed *thee*? or ministered not unto *thee*?" Not more infallibly does the brain receive the impression of pain when one member of the body suffers, than our Lord does when the least of these his brethren is grieved or wounded for his sake. The Jewish high priest carrying the names of the tribes engraven on his heart-plate when he appeared before God is no hyperbole: Jesus Christ has the names of his people engraven on his heart.

4. His intercession is conducted now by his appearing in our nature in heaven. In Rev. viii: 4, a priest is presented to our view standing at the altar of incense, having in his hand a censer with burning coals, and offering up the prayers of saints with much incense. He is called indeed an angel; but he is our great high-priest making our prayers his own, and sanctioning them by his own amen. They are immediately answered of course in the destruction of pagan Rome by the sounding of the seven trumpets.

We have two intercessors. "The spirit our petition writes, and Christ receives and hands it in!" The description of his appearance in Rev. I, as John beheld him, agrees to the appearance of a priest, in that he was girt about the paps. All others were girt about the loins; priests about the paps, and with a golden girdle. In the girdle of the high priest the threads of gold were so conspicuous as to make the girdle appear to be of gold entirely. The wearing of an ephod is implied, without which the girdle could not retain its place. He is thus our great high priest passed into the holy of holies. There he really performs what was typified in the symbolic acts of the Jewish high priest in the earthly temple.

In the organization of the nation in the wilderness, no king was anointed; the high priest was the chief official; and no other head or director was contemplated; nor would have ever been required, had the incumbents of this high office been men of the right stamp and character. The office required a man whose very countenance shone with "holiness to the Lord," while his heart beat with the strongest sympathy with Israel, whose names glittered on the jewels upon his breast. The great work which he illustrated was to be performed on earth so far as the blood-shedding and the offering were concerned; but the presentation of the blood, and the completion of the work was consummated in the secret place of the Most High, behind the veil, where mortal could not enter save the anointed Son of God.

The only real priest that has ever been, is Jesus Christ: the only real holy of holies is heaven; instead of the pillar of cloud, which became a pillar of fire when the blood was sprinkled upon the mercy seat, was the visible presence of God shining with mercy and favor upon the offerer, and those represented by him; instead of the ark and its cover, the mercy seat was the throne of God, whose foundation is the changeless law.

The same truth is taught by what was shown to John when he was permitted to look into heaven. He saw there the throne of God with no visible appearance of the first and third persons whose spiritual essence is not within the reach of our senses. The only visible occupant of the uncreated throne was a lamb as it had been slain *i. e.* living but with the marks of slaughter upon it. Him whom Isaiah and Ezekiel and Stephen saw in human form, John beheld as a lamb, that had been slain. The glorified body of Christ, with the marks of his atoning sufferings, occupies the seat of glory and of power, and bears the uncreated majesty in his person. He is still "clothed in a vesture stained with blood." The memory of his sufferings will never become less affecting. Angels who saw this earth prepared for human abode by the wonders of omnipotence, never saw anything more astounding than the passion of the Savior. To eternity the memory of it shall not fail.

This presence of the humanity wounded for us is a continual intercession: it is equivalent to a continual presentation of the blood. It is well compared to the Greek Eschylus holding up the stump of an arm lost in battle for his country, as a silent plea before the court, which had condemned his brother. No words were necessary.

There is a mute eloquence in the unhealed wounds, surpassing all the force of words. "Blessing and honor and glory and power" were his of right: but they are ascribed to him with a zeal and fervor before unknown. He sat upon the eternal throne before: now he sits upon a throne of hearts, the king of hearts, the love wonder of heaven, binding the universe to himself with stronger ties than bonds of force.

5. His intercession is for the same great objects, for which he supplicated while he was on earth. Men are continued in life, and enjoy gospel privileges and divine cultivation in answer to his pleading. The request of the vine-dresser in favor of the barren fig-tree is in point. God takes up the axe in order to cut it down, he draws the sword, wearied with its failure to respond to the merciful treatment received; but something in the very bosom of deity says. "Spare it another year," for increased cultivation and prolonged care. It is the voice of a Savior's intercession: and the axe is laid down, the sword is sheathed. His tears wept over Jerusalem secured to the guilty city a respite of judgment for forty years, and delayed its destruction until the hundred and forty-four thousand were sealed in their foreheads with the seal of the living God. When he was in the hands of his murderers, and their insults reached their supreme climax, his pity like the waters of the deluge rose higher than the tops of the mountains and overtopped their sins; and he interceded for them on his cross: "Father forgive them, they know not what they do." These are instances of his interceding work while on earth, and he is the same Jesus still; for the same things he still expresses his desire; and heaven bows to his wish. We know not how often God, provoked by our unfruitfulness, wearied by our sins, has grasped the sword of judgment to cut men off from their abused opportunities and

their slighted privileges; and the voice of pleading mercy has caused him to desist and defer his anger. He pities men's souls more than they themselves do.

He asks for his people, that they may be kept from apostasy. He said to his sleeping and treacherous Peter: "Satan hath desired to have you (plural), that he might sift you (plural) as wheat; but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." So keenly he watches every disciple, and will not let him go. "He is able to save them to the uttermost" *i. e.*, in spite of the perverseness of their natures, out of the hand of every enemy, out of the midst of every difficulty and opposition to the uttermost; "because he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Their faith shall not fail, sins shall not prevail against them, temptation shall not seduce them, he will not suffer them to be tempted beyond what they are able to bear; but will with the temptation open a way of escape; "because he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

It is not our hold on him that saves us; but his hold on us; "none is able to pluck them out of my hand" not "no man" as the A. V. reads, but *no power, no adversary* whatever. What he undertakes he will complete, "because he ever liveth to make intercession for us." He foresaw every obstacle and difficulty in the way of the salvation of every believer before he undertook the work of his deliverance; nothing unlooked for and surprising can occur to defeat his intent. He is watching every step of progress; and though we sleep when we should be praying, though we believe not, yet he abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself. He can leave them in the world, and keep them from the evil; not from its afflictions and sorrows and trials; but from the contamination of its sins.

He is interceding also for his church, the only heaven-organized society in the world, and his own kingdom on earth. As on a certain night from the mountain's height, he was watching the ship that carried his followers, through the wind and storm of the lake; so his attention is still fixed upon his church from the heights of glory. How he prayed in his solemn farewell prayer, for his disciples, that his people might glorify God by bringing forth

much fruit; that they might love one another, till the world take knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus; that they all might be one flock under one shepherd; and finally that those whom God had given him might be with him where he is, to behold his glory.

Undoubtedly the same objects are upon his heart still, and nothing is to him more important than the advance of his church. In answer to her prayer offered up by him before the throne, the heathen will be given to him for an inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession: his kingdom shall "come" over all the earth, to the utter downfall of the kingdom of Satan and destruction of the powers of evil. The second creation will be infinitely grander and more glorious than the first; when the word of God shall "make all things new."

6. His intercession is based on his atonement. He would never have opened his lips in our behalf, unless he had first paid our debt to divine justice. To plead for transgressors without atonement, is to shield them and their sin, which Christ could never do. He intercedes as "a lamb that had been slain," as a priest having blood to offer. In the temple on earth the lamb and the blood were the conspicuous and ever present objects; equally prominent on high is the "Lamb" able to obtain blessings for us; because he has died. Not more ready is he to ask, than God to bestow. As we anticipate the wishes of one whom we delight to honor, so heaven labors to honor the Son of God. He has died and *therefore* is worthy.

His name opens all the treasures of grace. If a poor, ragged, squalid tatterdemallion were to present himself at the counter of a bank, and call for unbounded sums of money, though bystanders might despise him, yet could he throw down an order with the name of an Astor or a Vanderbilt, it would at once unlock the otherwise inaccessible vaults, and bring him his desire. The name of Christ is good on high for all that we can ask. His prayer on earth always prevailed; how much more now that he is the one whom God delights to honor. Christians, it is not your prayers that have prevailed: it is Christ's. Men wondered

at the conversion of three thousand on the day of Pentecost: Christ had prayed, "Father, forgive them."

He is our only intercessor. Prior to his interference for man, there was no eye to pity, no arm to save, and no voice to speak for him. Consternation had seized on all the ranks of angelic beings. Sinless as they are, they fear and tremble before the holy Jehovah: and in view of that purity which surpasses all conception, which no comparison can match, no words describe, no created mind fathom, they eternally wonder and cry, holy, holy, holy. Lost in the blaze and oppressed by the intensity of incommunicable holiness, they are ever beholding new splendors and volumes of more effulgent glory breaking from the uncreated throne, and shooting their healing beams over the blissful plains of heaven. New worlds springing into being before their eyes could hardly divert for a time their attention from him, the view of whom arouses all the varied affections of their nature to the highest degree. Even in his mercy he is terrible, as the trembling penitent well knows. If he is thus fearful even in his love, "who can stand before this holy Lord God" who knows not to forgive in the sense in which men pardon, without atonement? Who would dare interfere to the dishonor of his law? Who meet that withering frown which is the hell of hells?

There was but one being, who could restore what had been taken away. No other than he could venture a word in our behalf. He who said, "spare them from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom," is our only advocate always, as he then stood alone our friend. Accursed be the thought, that any other can bear the smallest part with him in this high office. As his blood alone can atone, and he stands alone as our sacrifice: so he stands equally alone as our advocate. He pleads for sinners, for whom the most tender-hearted saint could not open the lips in supplication. There was a period when Moses, the highest example of a loving intercessor for Israel when on earth, became their accuser, and made intercession against them; while Jesus, infinitely more forbearing and long-suffering, could pray: "Father forgive them, they know not what they do." Stand aside, saints and apostles, and miscalled holy virgin. When you could only be dumb; Jesus will intercede.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE MIRACLES.

The possibility of miracles will never be denied except by those who doubt the existence of a living personal God: that they have actually occurred, all who receive the Bible as the inspired word, cannot fail to acknowledge. The Bible is the book of the supernatural: its first verse is the record of a miracle: its first chapter, of a succession of them, works of a divine magnitude; recorded also in the stone book of geology, preparing this earth for the introduction of man. The sea brought forth its occupants in shoals; the earth brought forth animals of every kind in droves. Inanimate nature was their mother; and her womb produced them at the divine command; but God with deliberate counsel came down, and organized dust and water into man; forming but one, the image of himself here below, a ruler of the inferior tribes, the head of a race yet to be.

His fearful and wonderful body surpassed in its mechanism all that had been previously made; and is the most astonishing of the known material works of God. Secrets of its construction are being detected in every age; but greater secrets perhaps remain undiscovered. Into this body, the master-piece of all his works, he breathed a living i. e. a deathless spirit, a miniature of his own divinity. The bodies of men were the subjects of the miracles of Christ: and that their maker should have absolute and unlimited control to produce changes in them at his pleasure, by the mere exercise of his will, needs no elucidation.

A miracle is a direct act of God, operating without the intervention of second causes; and to deny the possibility of its occurrence, is to deny the divine immanence in his creation, and his all-pervasive energy. What are called

laws of nature, are but modes in which this energy acts. The power exhibited in the works of Christ is this same creative, all-sustaining, everywhere-operative power. The appearance of such a being moving among men, was the greatest miracle of the ages.

The mighty works of the old dispensation were not numerous. God has never been prodigal of them: they were the common every-day acts of the Lord Jesus. They were his ordinary works, for which no preparation on his part was needed; and which were attended by no disturbance of his common life, either by exaltation or depression. They thus designate the most important epoch in the world's history; as well as fix attention upon the immaculate being, to whom the performance of the mightiest wonder was as natural and as easy as breathing is to us, and required no more effort. Not even the speaking of a word by him was required to accomplish the works effected by the disciples by the use of his name; nor was his personal presence necessary: simply his will.

The account, given by the evangelists of the miracles of their master, is itself proof of their actual occurrence. Inventors and romancers would have given to the wonderful works undue prominence; and would have embellished their histories with the most florid descriptions of them. Human curiosity naturally fastens on such incidents; and exaggerates their importance. The attention of the reader would have been directed to the strikingly forceful or pathetic aspects of the cases, which indeed can never be exceeded; no circumstance would have been overlooked, which could add to the impression of the magnitude and importance of the work effected.

In the gospel histories, on the contrary, every particular is suppressed, that can be spared from the narrative: and the bare facts are related without sensational details.

It is very plain that some of his mightiest works have not been duly appreciated to the present day; nor their greatness understood: so wonderfully have the writers abstained from description. They have adopted the master's estimate of the works, as secondary and subservient to the forthcoming truth. When it is remembered, what an im-

mense field was open for description, it is impossible not to be amazed at the style adopted by the evangelists, omitting every opportunity of magnifying the indescribable wonders of the ministry. Their very style is evidence of the veracity of the men, and the actual occurrence of the facts. It is well to be reminded that society in those days was under a perfect cloud of superstition. No greater knowledge of natural laws existed, than is found among the American Indians, or the African savages of to-day. Every one believed in the supernatural; but the supernatural powers were *malignant* in their operation. The works of Jesus were in perfect contrast, a display of divine tenderness and almighty healing virtue.

That the gospel miracles were wrought as related, the world will ever believe on the testimony of the twelve apostles, who were witnesses chosen of God for the purpose of certifying to all ages the acknowledged facts. These men were competent: as they had enjoyed all possible opportunity of sight, of hearing, of handling. They had been for two, and some of them for three years intimates and bosom friends of the Nazarene; and were observing for all time and all men. Three of them had entered the holy of holies on the mountain top: (for it is the presence of Jehovah, which makes the holy of holies): their eyes had beheld the shechinah cloud; and their ears had heard the voice that once spoke from the mount of fire. Nothing had been withheld from their scrutiny. Peter, who was one of them, says when speaking of it: "We have a more sure word of prophecy, to which ye do well to take heed, as to a light shining in a dark place." The word is a standing light, a more sure evidence than the most striking miracles.

They were the most reliable witnesses, that ever testified. Was he, through whose lips the judgment was denounced, which sent Ananias and Sapphira to an instant hell, himself a greater liar in his testimony to Jesus?

The apostle James another witness was a man so just, that Josephus even mused; whether the terrible overthrow of Jerusalem were not a retribution to the city for his death.

The apostle Judas confirmed the testimony in the most emphatic declaration of all: a testimony extorted by the pains of premature torment, and sealed by suicide. The agreement of all is solid and perfect. They all with one exception sealed their testimony with their blood. Their testimony is not the testimony of men merely—it is testimony of the Most High: “God also bearing them witness both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will.” The miracles were then wrought exactly as related by the evangelists, who understate rather than exaggerate, and relate without the slightest tinge of human coloring.

This is confirmed incontrovertibly by the opposition of the Jewish rulers against the Nazarene. This opposition was begotten *wholly* by the miracles. Without the backing of the mighty works, our Lord would have been quite contemptible; as coming from the lowest ranks of society, and being a miserable Nazarene, unsustained by worldly influence, or party following. The leaders would have utterly ignored him, by any public recognition; as they long followed him by spies, before public notice was taken. His miracles were the stamp of heaven accrediting him. The benevolence and glory of his works touched the heart of the nation; wiped the tears from many a weeping eye; sent joy and gladness into many a desolate family; and forced attention to him. When all eyes became riveted upon him; and his teachings, universally reported, began to touch the tender spot of their formalism; investigation by the rulers could no longer be refused. His great and ever-increasing prestige compelled attention.

His miracles fought their way to the most full and perfect recognition by his most violent enemies. At first they passed unnoticed by the Sanhedrin: until it was no longer possible to ignore them. Then they were sneeringly attributed to the aid of Belzebub; at last they were subjected to the most rigid and hostile examination; and reluctantly admitted to be genuine miracles; but such as proved him to be “not of God;” though confessedly the works were divine; for they said to the man born blind: “Give God the praise,” admitting that this was the finger of God.

Wrought as his works were upon the best known individuals of the day, and under the very eyes of the opposers: the facts were undeniable; but they proved too much. They not only set the great seal of heaven upon his mission: but they proved his divine personality. The voice at the Jordan did not more distinctly assert it. The everlasting Father himself never did an act more divinely than did the Nazarene. Every miracle threw his enemies into spasms, because it was an authoritative declaration of his real standing; against those the fury of the opposition flung itself. The history shows that each successive mighty work added incalculably to the mad opposition of the enemies.

Every attack made upon him was directed against the miracles. The first exhibition of murderous rancor took place as the result of the Bethesda miracle, when they made, not the violation of the Sabbath, but the violation of their tradition, a capital offence. At Bethsaida, where he fed a multitude with five loaves and two fishes the falling away of the people commenced, and spread; until he asked the twelve: "Will ye also go away:" so strong was the ebb-tide of his followers. His giving eyes to the man born blind greatly inflamed the resentment of his enemies, who had already resolved to excommunicate any who might confess him. The unspeakable benefit to the unfortunate man did not enter into their thoughts, neither could they charge that the Sabbath had been broken in the least; yet their opposition was redoubled in consequence of the "good work." The raising of Lazarus from the tomb led those same men to take immediate and vigorous measures against the miracle-worker and against Lazarus also; though it were impossible to devise a charge of wrong with all their ingenuity. It was the overwhelmingly glorious and divine work that angered them. Every accusation formulated against him was provoked by some miracle: that of Sabbath breaking, of being in league with Beelzebub, of stirring up the people. It is impossible to account for the opposition, the rejection, the death; without admitting the miracles as the operative cause. *The key of the whole history* is the undeniable occurrence of the most

striking, most benevolent and loving miracles, whose actual happening his enemies acknowledged when plotting his capture, and even while he was dying on the cross, confessing: "he saved others; himself he cannot save."

Above all, the great miracle of the resurrection from the dead, in the face of the combined powers of the day, demonstrates the verity of all the foregoing wonders, as related; and remains to all time the sign and confirmation of his truth, being so established by the master himself. No event of history is sustained by evidence so ungainsayable; and the admission of the truth of the account carries with it the acknowledgment of all the previous wonders. It was the "sign" given to the world, the attestation of heaven, the great seal of Jehovah himself. But what denial, what rage did it excite! It became the focus of all the opposition; even from the men, who knew that it really occurred just as well as the soldiers did, who saw the eyes of lightning, and beheld the stone rolled away. These rulers were the men whose eyes explored the sepulchre, and saw that the body was there; and whose hands sealed the stone with the great seal of state; and who gave their orders to the guard. Instead of being subdued by the fact, they were rather bereft of reason by it; and confirmed in insane opposition. The real occurrence of all the wonders of the life is substantiated by this opposition, only to be accounted for by the facts that produced it.

The works of the Savior, unlike those of the old dispensation, were none of them destructive; but all were works of sympathy and aid to suffering humanity: the fate of the Gadarene swine, and the withering of the barren fig tree forming no exceptions. They loudly proclaim that there is sympathy in heaven for the needy and unfortunate. When our Lord was importuned and challenged to show, as a sign of his power, some prodigy or portent from the sky, he declined all demonstration except that of succor to the afflicted. It was impossible to move him from the course prescribed. A restriction was upon him: works were given him to do which had in them no ostentation. A hidden danger lay in the repetition of any of the old time signs from heaven. The nation was awaiting a sign; and

was willing to leap to arms on the signal given. Rome never, in all her wars, undertook a more desperate task, than when she entered into conflict with them. No nation was ever so unanimous, none so confident, none so fierce. They could be scattered and driven out; but they could never be conquered. They were ready as the tinder for the spark, waiting with a smothered eagerness for the coming *sign*.

In the midst of this subterranean ferment, when questions of the gravest import were agitating the Hebrew mind, our Lord exercised his ministry: and though things were calm during that short period: a time of ungovernable turbulence ensued, beginning with his death, when the nation went wild with disappointment, and became demoralized beyond control. The world is lost in admiration of the consummate prudence of his whole career.

His mighty works were noiseless. The most unworldly character, a man of another world, passed before the eyes of the people: the most unworldly teachings saluted their ears: all worldly themes and interests being overshadowed and dwarfed, in the preponderance of eternal realities and spiritual obligations. His discourses had in them no intimation of coming deliverance from the oppression of Rome; but dark foreshadowings of the destruction of their city and temple. He was utterly unlike all the heroes of the past, a perfect contrast to the models of the older times: incapable of resentment, suffering wrongfully without a murmur; when reviled, reviling not again; when suffering, threatening not; unaffected by scorn; unsusceptible of any harshness of feeling to an enemy; but full of tenderness and love and help to the afflicted and enemies as well.

Nevertheless the works of Jesus exactly suit the description by Isaiah quoted by him in the synagogue of Nazareth: "The Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor; to heal the broken-hearted; to proclaim the Jubilee to the captives; the recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised." He followed out the programme to the letter.

Let attention be fixed upon his works. In many cases no mention is made of the ailments which he relieved: but

where named, they are paralysis, leprosy, palsy, consumption by an incurable issue of blood, blindness, congenital blindness, deaf and dumbness, possession by devils, and death. Loss of limbs is also named among ills relieved: the word "maimed" having this meaning; halt and maimed being put in apposition with having two hands or two feet Mk. ix: 43. The one-legged and one-armed were, "the maimed;" all the affections named are irremediable calamities. The sufferers indulged no hope of deliverance: not one ray of expectation cheered them. To speak to them of recovery were a bitter mockery. The saying of the man born blind expressed the feeling of all: "since the world began was it never heard; that one opened the eyes of a man born blind." Hope had bidden them an everlasting farewell. For them to think of an escape from their condition of privation or suffering were the wildest insanity; to indulge the expectation were to rebel against inexorable fate. The cures effected by the Savior were every one of them as remarkable as would have been resurrections from the dead.

In such cases to apply to Jesus of Nazareth at all was evidence of a stronger faith than is common at the present day. Not Lazarus in his tomb was farther from life and hope, than those who came to Jesus for relief. Despair had fastened its iron grip upon their hearts; in many cases death with its icy fingers was feeling for the seat of life; and the lips of prayer had ceased supplication for deliverance. One of them said to Jesus: "Thou canst make me whole"; and this betokened a mighty faith. Such were those whom Jesus healed; not the prisoners of hope; but prisoners of despair from the lowest vaults of the Stygian dungeon.

Creative power alone could afford relief from their distresses. What was asked from him was a greater boon than the gift of the world without it: and asked by those who could offer no return other than gratitude. In all cases there was no doubt to whom the favored ones were indebted; one, and one alone, could claim all the gratitude; no partnership in the work and the glory of it was admissible. The subjects must have felt that it was no rob-

bery in him to make himself equal with God; and not only they; but all interested and cognizant. Each case awakened discussion in the respective neighborhoods similar to that detailed in John IX. and drew all eyes to one centre. No greater public benefactor ever appeared: and priceless benefits freely bestowed, in cases too multiplied to be enumerated or recorded over all parts of the land, and even in adjoining territories marked the period as the era of the son of man.

Not only were the favors which he bestowed above all price; the tenderness of his compassion, and the loving kindness of his manner of bestowment made the gifts doubly memorable. It seemed to gratify him as much to give; as it did the applicants to receive. The existence of a real faith he infallibly discerned, and ever greeted it with a joy, that illuminated his whole countenance: and a bond that nothing could sever was at once established between himself and the possessor of this faith. The opportunity of conferring blessings was eagerly seized by him; and it made him appear like the shepherd finding his lost sheep with uncontrollable joy, or the father embracing his lost son. He tenderly addressed his beneficiaries as "son" or "daughter:" and they were not words of hollow compliment. The very tone of his voice assuaged the tumult of excitement; stilled the anxieties of fear; commanded the most eager and engrossed attention: the touch of his hand thrilled the subject with a new sensation: and he withheld nothing that was asked or that could possibly be received: "be it unto thee even as thou wilt." He granted all with the same readiness and freedom, with which he forgives iniquity, transgression and sin. It is difficult to see how those, who received mercies from him, could avoid being caught in the toils of his love, and drawn to him, as the man born blind was, or the poor demoniac of Gadara, or Mary Magdalene, whose love was all the return the mighty healer sought. He was seeking recipients more zealously than sufferers were seeking deliverance: and the greater the help demanded by a case; the more eagerly and affectionately was it bestowed.

What do these miracles teach respecting their great author, was a matter of reflection in many minds. It can confidently be said, that he who can create a new limb to replace one that has been lost, or that can put an eye in an empty socket, can create man. He, who can instantly, and perfectly, and permanently remove a disease, that is bringing its victim to the very gate of the tomb, and has him as its sure prey; is master of death and grave. He, who can bring back from the sepulchre a single body already the prey of corruption, can call the sleepers of all time, and they shall come forth. He, who can create a single grain of sand out of nothing, can create a world. He who can tread upon the waves of the sea, and command its finny inhabitants to do his bidding; who can ascend the pathway of the skies, to his original home is no mere man. He who can cast out the devils from their usurped dominion of a human subject, and restore lost reason to its throne; who can subdue sins as strong and as terrible as the demons; and forgive sins blacker than night; though he be in the likeness of sinful flesh, is no sinner himself. He, who can by his blood take away the sins of the world, is higher than the heavens, more worthy than angels; inasmuch as he has obtained a more excellent name than they. He, at whose death the sun and earth were mourners, whom the grave could not hold is God. His works were the smallest that he could perform; he reduced himself to the lowest stage that could be attained; yet is he king of glory, the king of hearts. He sits on the throne of universal dominion; but his most chosen throne is the humble and contrite heart.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE TEACHING.

Never man spake like this man. Jno. VII: 46.

We have in our gospels the words of Jesus without the accompaniment of tone and look and emphasis, on which so much of the force of speech depends. Of the impression which they made upon his hearers, when backed by his personality, we can form but a meagre conception. In the discourse which led to this expression of the officers, there must have been force in the manner and tone, as well as in the words. They evidently understood that he knew them and their errand, and as it were, challenged them to execute it. They were however powerless before him, and appreciated how awful goodness is, and truth, which formed a defense around him more impregnable than arms. Before his look disguises vanished; and masks were dropped; and against him no hand could be stretched out. He was safe in the midst of raging enemies, as amid adoring angels; and that from his felt superiority, which seems to have been as evident to all beholders as the light of day. An inquiry into the character of his teaching cannot fail to interest and instruct.

1. And first he commenced his ministry without any previous preparation. Letters he had never learned; he had sat at the feet of no rabbi; resorted to no library; nor travelled like the ancient philosophers in the quest of truth, making what was the tour of the world to them. He went directly from the workshop to the pulpit, unsupplied with the material of wisdom from any earthly source; and dropped upon the stage, causing the greatest sensation of history. Inspired apostles were not sent without a prolonged training; and prophets were often terribly prepared for their work. Moses "come to years" believed himself born

to deliver Israel: but forty years of exile and bruising in God's will were required fully to qualify him. "By terrible things in righteousness" God often takes his messenger through the deep experience of the truths, which he is to be sent to announce. We can but weep with Jeremiah as we read how God prepared his head as waters, and his eyes as fountains of tears. Jonah required to ride three days and three nights from the Straits of Gibraltar to the Persian Gulf in a new style of conveyance, the belly of a whale; in order to be fitted for his mission. God teaches as man cannot. The highest degree of his university the D. D. is "acquainted with grief."

He prepares his servants for their work, he knows how to make the heart soft, how to pour grace into the lips: how to write a message upon the soul with a "pen of iron and the point of a diamond."

But in Jesus we see one who needed no training; a young man from the carpenter's bench, knowing no book but the Old Testament, having received nothing from man; "a polished shaft" which man never shaped; who speaks, "and eternity is filled with his voice." His words have more force to-day than when first uttered, because better understood, and will gain new accessions of strength while the earth endures.

He is drawing from inexhaustible stores of knowledge and wisdom. The light of eternity is that by which he teaches, shining more and more as time wears away. He speaks in a desultory manner as occasions arise; but the world has not yet fathomed the full depth and reach of his words. When like leaven they permeate the whole lump; man will be restored to God; and the earth will become a miniature of heaven. He aims to be the king of hearts, and to surround himself with subjects capable of stronger love than angels, and in consequence, of a fuller happiness than theirs. As his kingdom enlarges and develops, it will make of all nations one family; subdue and eradicate the great causes of misery; and produce a more and more close resemblance to that world, into which sin cannot enter. There is but one being in whose breast a design so stupendous could be begotten.

His claims were supreme from the very outset; they did not grow with time and success. And yet not his claims: he made no claims; he did not bear witness of himself. It was the father who bore witness of him. From the first he stood before the nation as the eternal son of the eternal father: his claims were not suggested by events and opportunities. The nation was indeed ripe for the reception of a temporal king, and offered a most desirable field for an enterprise of a worldly kind; but his way lay not in that direction. He suddenly came to the temple, as the lightning flashes out of the midnight darkness; and taking possession of "his Father's house," cleansed it from the defilements of unholy traffic; thereby fulfilling prophecy, and declaring his position and pretensions.

2. His style of teaching was the simplest and most forcible that could be used. His meaning was never doubtful: no shadow of uncertainty ever dimmed the light of his instructions. Truth in its naked beauty shone without a veil in his utterances. His illustrations were of the very simplest kind; and he abounded in them, drawn from what was passing before the eyes of his auditors, the fowls of the air, the flowers of the field, the labors of the husbandman, the tasks of the housewife, the shepherd, and the sheep, of which Jerusalem at times was full, the happenings of every day life, intelligible to every hearer. His parables show an exhaustless wealth of illustration; while he could turn every ordinary occurrence into a vehicle of religious truth, and associate religious instruction with every usual happening of life.

But what lent a hundred fold force to his words was the fact, that he made his miracles illustrations of the truth which he was inculcating at the time.

The cure of the paralytic at Capernaum is an instance. He was probably speaking on the subject of the divine forgiveness of sins at the time, when the couch with the helpless sufferer was let down into the midst of the crowd, and immediately before himself; and he, knowing the condition of mind in which the patient was, most lovingly and naturally announced to him: "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee:" and when the hearts of the hearers

were agitated with the inquiry, "who can forgive sins, but God only?" he, in proof of his right to forgive, commanded the man to arise, take up his bed, and go to his own house. The matter proved was, that Jesus had power to restore the soul to the favor of God, its normal condition: just as his ability was demonstrated to restore the body to its normal physical condition. The miracle was an illustration and a demonstration. We are not astonished when Luke tells us, v: 26, "They were all amazed, and glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, we have seen strange things to-day." The illustration and proof given had overwhelmed all who saw it.

So the gospel invitation to those that labor and are heavy laden, Matt. xi: 28, followed the healing of a great number of blind, deaf, lame, lepers, etc., before the eyes of the messengers of John. In concluding the array of evidence to be reported to the Baptist, he added this precious invitation to all, through all time, who were suffering from the distress and miseries of sin, to come to him and find rest for their souls; as this multitude had found relief for their bodies. His ability to heal to the uttermost had been exhibited: and it was a fitting opportunity to extend his offer of aid to all who were groaning under the great spiritual malady of sin. His miracles were thus object lessons, and so never diverted the attention of the hearers from the great truths inculcated; but deepened the impressions of them vastly. His teachings were never disturbed by miracles; but their force was greatly intensified: palpable demonstrations being interspersed.

The healing of the centurion's servant in Capernaum became a teaching of the calling of the Gentiles, and the rejection of Israel for their lack of faith: this faith of the soldier being the most gratifying offering to the Christ that he had received on earth. No white-winged seraph could add a greater honor to his Lord, than does a sinner who trusts his word. For the lack of such faith, God's covenant people, allied by a bond of twenty centuries, would be rejected.

So the restoration of the man born blind was a lesson and an invitation. His enemies had just attempted to

stone the Savior: and the prayer was already in his heart, "Father forgive them: they know not what they do." How easily he could have helped their unbelief, and how readily he would have complied with a request for his aid, was exemplified before their eyes in the monumental deliverance of the poor beggar, whom they all had known from childhood, a constant temple attendant. This man stood long before their view, an ever present reminder of a living deliverer, waiting to save even his perverse enemies.

His miracles abundantly represented him as the physician of souls: that he could relieve the blind, the dumb, the leper, the possessed. The great obstacle, in the way of salvation of any man, is the necessity of applying to Jesus, as being blind, and deaf, and leprous, and possessed.

So in the defence before the Sanhedrin, recorded in John, v. ch., which was made near the time, when he restored to life the daughter of Jairus and the young man of Nain, we read in vs. 28-29, "marvel not at this," etc. Imagine him standing in the house of Jairus, or in the street of Nain, beside the empty bier, and saying: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in their graves shall hear his [my] voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." The evidence was before the eyes of all. The miracle and the truth illustrated may not have come simultaneously; but they were always in such close connection, as to give power to his words, such as never could attend the speech of man.

So when he entered Jerusalem in triumph, with his cheeks wet with sorrow over the fearful doom awaiting her, which his own lips had pronounced; the next day he withered away from the very roots the barren fig tree, the hardest of trees; that it might stand with its blighted trunk and blackened branches, to confirm continually to beholders the words of doom, by which the holy city had been consigned to its merited fate.

His miracles were thus all subservient to his teachings, and secondary. Each one was an illustration and a demonstration of the truth uttered at the time. Each was

an object lesson, repeating with a hundred-fold force the words of his lips. Miracles and teachings are so interwoven and blended as to lose much of their impression, detached as we read them. He, who could answer the thoughts of men, and make all the powers of nature enforce what he said, stands unparalleled. "Never man," nor angel, nor the most exalted creature, "spake like this man." His words seem never to have been forgotten by friend or foe; but to have been branded into the memory. Could we weave into one combined history the four accounts which we possess, with the miracles dove-tailed each into its actual place, with the accompanying words connected, we should be able to realize something of the mighty sensation, which shook the hearts of men with an inconceivable force, during his short ministry.

Of course such a being was emphatically alone in his undertaking, without companion or counsellor. None comprehended him; not his mother and brethren, nor his chosen twelve, who were rather incumbrances and clogs; nor his great forerunner, who seems at the last to have almost given up his faith. "He traveled in the greatness of his strength; and of the people there was none with him." He "sailed through bloody seas" alone. In all God's works he is alone. "I am he that stretcheth out the heavens alone, and spreadeth abroad the earth by myself. My glory will I not give to another." "Who hath given to him? and it shall be recompensed to him again." "He trod the wine-press alone; and of the people there was none with him." None partook or shared with him: our Jesus labored and taught and died alone.

4. He taught with an indescribable authority; an authority resulting from the subjects of his discourse, and the personality of the teacher. To him this world and the present life were as nothing: the boundless hereafter and the undying soul were alone worthy of thought. His very look carried with it a conviction of the unseen and eternal: in his presence no doubt could be entertained respecting God and immortality. Heaven and hell were realities when he spoke. In comparison with these mighty themes, all earthly matters shrank into trifles. The most

terrible expressions of the scriptures respecting final retribution came from his lips: "hell-fire," "damnation of hell," "flame of torment," "fire that shall never be quenched," "worm that never dies." In discussing these mighty themes, the power of truth has made kings to tremble and keep silence. How deep their impression from the lips of the sinless one!

And then Jesus never intimates that his teachings depend for their authority upon a higher than himself. The first notice which we gain of this high prestige comes from those who heard the sermon on the mount. His subject was the law of eternal right, which assigns to God the throne of undivided dominion, and makes him sovereign of created things: and here he places himself in the seat of power, and makes himself the source and head of all right. His discrimination of evil in its minutest ramifications, and his condemnation of it in its most subtle attenuations belong to omniscient purity. Sin is the poison of human nature, the curse of the earth, the thing which God hates: and the slightest tinge of evil is abhorrent to him: as the faintest smell of corruption causes us to reject what is tainted. He ferrets it out in its deepest hiding place, and smites it with the sword of his mouth at its first appearance in the thoughts of the heart. "Heaven and earth shall pass; but one jot or title of the law shall not fail." It is changeless as the eternal throne, and bottomed on the immutable attributes of Jehovah, being a glass in which can be discovered the divine holiness and glory.

Who interprets law authoritatively? the highest court in existence, a branch of the government as exalted and responsible as the legislative itself. Jesus interprets it as being the ultimate judge, from whose decree there lies no appeal. Listen with the hand upon the mouth. He may be correcting the false interpretations of the day; in some cases he may be correcting Moses; but in others, he takes the words out of the mouth of God himself, and defines their intent. "Ye have heard that it hath been said to them of old time, thou shalt not commit adultery." Who said this of old time? Jehovah from the top of the mount of fire. Hear him: "But *I* say unto you." It is not

matter of wonder that the people were astonished. Who is this being who can, without awakening disgust and horror arrogate the prerogative of Jehovah? None seem to have been shocked: but rather all felt that the claim agreed with the immeasurable dignity and purity of the mysterious speaker. No other being ever lived on earth of whom such a thought could be entertained for a moment. But the point is not proved so much from the consent of the hearers, as from the fact that Jesus assumed the character. He never withdrew the claim; though the nation demanded retraction at the peril of death. He retained the consciousness to the last, and expressed it with his dying breath, in the honest hour of dissolution.

The authority, which men discovered in him, was identical with the authority of the divine law, and the cause of God on earth was his own cause. The church is the light of the world, simply as it reflects his teachings and spirit; and the salt of the earth as it is the channel through which his grace is communicated. Persecution for righteousness' sake is persecution for his sake. He came into the world to save men; and they quickly drove him out of it. Prophets and apostles drink of the same cup, and are baptized with the same baptism for his sake.

At the close of the sermon he announces himself as the final judge of men, whose individual destiny will be determined according to their regard for his words, or neglect of them. Such teachings produced a deeper sensation than his mightiest miracles, and left a more lasting impression; and he carried with him the judgment and conscience of his auditors. Such words were never heard on earth before or since. He was no inspired prophet, but the sender of the prophets; he was no messenger, but the world's master; come to seek fruit from his vineyard. "He could not be hid:" his very tone detected him.

5. He taught with a mingled severity and love peculiar to himself. The last of the prophets had left the prediction: "Behold he shall come: but who may abide the day of his coming? for he shall be like the refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap." The refiner's fire is a singularly small, but intensely hot flame, capable of subduing the most re-

fractory ore, until it runs down like water. The fuller's soap cannot be handled without excoriation, so caustic is its purifying power. Everyone that approached him was cast into the crucible of the refiner, or into the vat of the fuller. At this distance of time we stand appalled at his denunciations, at the immeasurable severity of his judgments: but attending his sternest condemnation, we hear an undertone of soul-dissolving pity, a perfect groan of compassion. These are among the most touching passages of the gospel. It is the same Jesus, dooming the holy city amid loud weeping and streaming tears, who is groaning over souls lost.

With what terrible reproofs he assailed the religious leaders of the day: "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." Nor was he more lenient towards his disciples and friends: witness his reproof of Peter: "Get thee behind me, Satan; for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men." Nothing less could be expected from infinite purity tabernacling among a people of unclean lips; but his indignation, not having the smallest tinge of scorn or contempt, smote only that it might heal; killed only that it might make alive.

In the midst of terrible rebuke, directed against the most malignant enemies, we hear the moving of the bowels of unutterable compassion, and behold the tears of divine pity. This blending of justice and mercy is inimitable, and imparts a melting pathos to his most caustic rebukes. It is as though we were privileged to look through the fires and smoke of the burning Sinai to the very seat of the law-giver; and there behold, not the storm-clad Jehovah upon his throne of fire; but the bleeding Jesus upon a Roman cross. Irreconcilable opposites meet and combine in glorious harmony in him: the most intense hatred of the sin, and the most incredible love for the sinner; a zeal that would stamp out transgression with blood, and with it a tenderness that would rescue the transgressor at the

sacrifice of life. His anger is grief: "He looked upon them with anger," "being grieved because of the hardness of their hearts."

6. He completed the revelation. The scriptures of the Old Testament were incomplete; and the system of religion contained in them, while intelligible so far as the existence of one living and true God, and the accountability and immortality of man, and the possibility of divine forgiveness of sins are concerned; yet beyond these primary truths is wholly obscure and unintelligible. The round of rites and ceremonies enjoined needed interpretation; and their drift was wholly misunderstood by the nation which practiced them, and adhered to them with an unconquerable attachment. That the bloody sacrifices had a Messianic reference, and that a great atoning work of the coming deliverer was shadowed forth in them, the Jewish people were profoundly ignorant.

Dr. Edersheim has collated from the rabbinic writings all the passages of prophecy, which the writers have quoted as referring to the Messiah; and we gather from his enumeration, that they did not interpret the ordained sacrifices as having any reference to his work. They were far from understanding that the mission of the Messiah would be to suffer, and to atone. Abraham had indeed been privileged to see the day of Christ, and had learned that, when the great propitiation should be made, God himself would furnish the lamb for a burnt-offering; and that it would be his own Isaac. The truths veiled under the mysterious events upon Mount Moriah, were easily overlooked. Formalism and self-righteousness "see and perceive not, hear and understand not: their heart is fat, their ears are heavy, and their eyes are shut."

Judaism was unintelligible; its symbol was a veil, denoting that more was concealed than was revealed. Through the veil none could see the beyond; the essentials lay hidden in the impenetrable holy of holies. Judaism was like a beautiful but headless statue uncovered from the rubbish of ages, of faultless proportions, and of unparalleled beauty and grace; but imperfect, wanting its chief part. The head, if ever recovered, must exactly fit the fracture,

with a perfectly corresponding surface, answering to every protuberance and indentation of the break. Christianity supplies the lacking head and completes the statue, a form of most enchanting loveliness. Judaism was a bud undeveloped, in which lay enclosed a most gorgeous flower invisible until the time came for its leaves to open.

The veil dividing the visible world from the invisible was rent in the death of Christ; the temple of God was thrown wide open; and the mysteries of our forgiveness by a sin-hating God have been revealed, and became matters of knowledge. We now understand the conflict of the divine attributes; and how they harmonize in the work of our Redeemer. His great sacrifice revealed the character of God in the full-orbed glory of his high perfections, and made harmoniously plain the great principles of the divine government. The necessity of an adequate propitiation to the law of God has been most forcibly declared; and we now know, that it was made by the sacrifice of the sinless Lamb of God in the place of sinners and on their behalf.

Judaism was a great enigma that all the wisdom of man was incompetent to solve: the key was lacking. The death of Christ as a substitute for sinners furnishes the key to the whole word of God, opens all the mysteries of the kingdom, explains all the obscurities of the old dispensation, and completes and concludes the whole revelation. He came to "seal up the vision and prophecy." No further addition can ever be made, no further addition is needed.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE PARABLES.

The instructions of our Lord were more lucid and intelligible than any ever delivered by sages, philosophers and founders of schools among men. With him was no uncertainty about that which was to be believed, or about the duties to be practiced. He never expressed a doubt, nor uttered an opinion. Every statement was definite as could be made in words; and his language was the simplest and most distinct, never concealing ignorance behind a cloud of verbiage; but on the contrary brief, direct and luminous. Neither had he one set of teachings for outsiders, and another class of esoteric doctrines for pronounced disciples. Truth, like the light of the sun invariable through all ages and in all lands, is uniform, as is obligation and duty: such inflexible constancy is found in the teachings of the Nazarene. There came a period in his ministry, however, when he adopted the method of parables for good reasons; a method peculiar to himself, and the highest style of instruction attainable.

The use of allegories, and fables has always been a favorite mode for conveying instruction; as they fasten the attention of hearers, illustrate truth by pleasing and pictorial representations, eagerly heard, easily understood, and delighting the fancy while instructing the mind: and hence they have not been considered beneath the employment of the most illustrious writers of antiquity, and of modern times as well. The allegory is a wholly fictitious narrative, whose object is to describe or illustrate by an imagined history something entirely diverse and wholly separate from itself. The fable differs from the allegory, in that the occurrences set forth in it not only never took place; but are wholly impossible. It attributes reason and

speech to animals and even vegetables, and rational conduct to the blind forces of nature: nevertheless the story illustrates some principle or truth designed to be strongly emphasized and applied. Like the allegory and the fable, the parable is intended for the illustration of some spiritual matter entirely diverse from itself; but it differs from them in one chief characteristic: that there is not a word of fiction in it. It is a true history in every particular of some process of nature, or of some event in human life or society, which is made to represent and illustrate a matter wholly spiritual, and lying beyond the ken of sense. The occurrences detailed in it if not actual are yet possible. It is not a single illustration merely but a bundle of them; every particular in the account being an illustration of something corresponding in the spiritual world; so each parable is a collection of illustrations, which cast a multifold light over the matter in hand. This one feature of absolute truth is the main characteristic of the parable; distinguishing it from the allegory and the fable, and furnishes the reason for its adoption by our Savior. Not that deception is intended in the use of the allegory and fable; but he could not condescend to employ them. Truth brighter than suns is his element, and the uncreated light in which he dwells; and while he passed through a world, whose air is foul with falsehood, "the smell of the fire was not on him," nor the slightest odor of its taint. "In his lips was no guile." He is "the truth" and as transcendently worthy of our adoration for this quality, as for the incommunicable attributes of his divinity.

Instruction by parable was by no means foreign to the word of God, or contrary to the usages of the Jewish people. The typical ceremonies of their own Scriptures were in a sense parables. In them spiritual truths of vast moment were represented by a series of specified forms; the smallest particular of which had couched under it a meaning of immense significance. Nothing ordained of heaven was unworthy of consideration; and volumes of meaning were contained in the smallest required act; were it only the posture of the hands, or the uncovering of the feet.

The study of the law was with the Jews a life work; and it should have been a study of the great spiritual truths indicated in the forms; and doubtless had been such in the days of piety: however much it may have degenerated into an effort for a laborious externalism. To a people trained as they were, the interpretation of "dark sentences" was a grateful employment; and they relished truth conveyed under an abstruse covering, and demanding an interpreter. Their taste was formed by the very cast of their system of ceremonies, each one of which was a parabolic representation.

This style of communicating knowledge is agreeable and fascinating to Orientals yet. And others than Orientals feel the force of a comparison, which holds through a succession of particulars, that make a living picture fitted to illustrate and enforce truth. No teacher ever had such power of illustration as our Lord: and his illustrations abide in the memory, and furnish unfailing food for thought. No better system of mnemonics was ever devised; and no surer way of catching the attention and fixing impressions. Perhaps no parable was ever forgotten by those who heard it; and it was surely recalled at every recurrence of the incidents on which it was based. It would seem that its meaning, if not immediately obvious, would be grasped in time, and after patient consideration. All that would be needed would be to have the key; and then at a glance more would be seen than could be conveyed in long descriptions: and more is condensed into a smaller space, than books can contain. His illustrations were from objects continually before the eyes of all, the simplest and the homeliest, from the every-day acts of the shepherd and fisherman and agriculturist, the daily duties of the housewife, from marriage customs, usages at feasts, from the vine everywhere present, from the herbs of the garden, and flowers of the field; being level to the comprehension of the lowest, while worthy of the attention of the highest, and passing ever under the eyes of all.

Some of the miracles of our Lord were wholly parabolic, such as the withering of the barren fig-tree, the succor afforded to the toiling disciples when he came to them

walking on the waves, and enabled Peter to follow his example; and gave him the mastery over the raging wind and sea. These and some others of the miracles were not wrought for the relief of suffering, but wholly to convey instruction; and may be properly classed as parables; but each and every one of the wonderful works of help to the needy, was also designed to teach and illustrate certain truths, as well as to relieve suffering. They represented two essential facts, the condition of need in which all men are, their abnormal state, and the existence of a helper possessing the power needful for their recovery, and the willingness to use that power in behalf of every applicant. To this extent, as they represent these great gospel truths, they are truly parables; so that we may say with truth that every miracle was also a parable; not couched indeed in words, but still delineating in striking visibility the great internal deliverance which the Savior effects.

There is in the parable something very much akin to the obscurity of prophecy. The visions of the prophets are largely emblematical representations of future events.

If we consider closely the language of prophecy, we shall find it eminently parabolic; *i. e.*, it is full of comparisons which hold through a series of particulars, illustrating spiritual truths, after the style of the parable. If we take for an example, the familiar fortieth chapter of Isaiah, the prophet hears the voice of a herald crying in the wilderness: "Prepare ye the way of the Lord," particularizing the work to be accomplished. The great lack of the nations of antiquity was properly constructed roads, making travel possible and easy. The people are therefore called upon to prepare a way for the king's progress, by making cuts through the hills, and embankments through the valleys, and thus securing a level route, also by making the track as straight as possible, and smoothing the roughness of the country, that the expected Messiah may come without hindrance. Zion and Jerusalem, who are understood to be leaders in spiritual matters, are called upon to get up into the high mountain to look for his approach, and publish it when observed with loud voice

to the cities of Judah. Behold, he shall come as a shepherd to his flock. All this is to be understood spiritually, and to be interpreted just as a parable is.

Then we have a description of Jehovah arranging the world—measuring the water for the seas in the hollow of his hand, meting out the heaven with a span, portioning out the dust of the earth in a measure, weighing out the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance. Lebanon is not sufficient for the wood of an offering, nor all its beasts for a burnt offering. All nations are to him but as the drops of a bucket, and are counted to him less than nothing and vanity. To whom then will ye liken God? Of course, this is not susceptible of literal interpretation. Almost any other chapter, that could have been selected, would have been as clear an example of this style: showing that the whole prophetic scripture is a succession of emblematical or pictorial representations and parabolic descriptions.

The parable is thus an eminently scriptural mode of communicating divine truth; and it occupies the principal place among the chosen methods; and is especially adapted to its great author; and thus it was particularly foretold of the Messiah, that he should teach by this method; “that he should open his mouth in parables, and declare things which had been kept secret from the foundation of the world.” So wisely and fully has our Lord complied with this prediction, that if the whole gospel history were lost; and only the record of the parables were preserved; this would be so in keeping with the methods of revelation, as to be well and easily understood; and sufficient knowledge of the Savior and his work would be gainable from them to lead without fail to eternal life. If the parable holds so high a place in the scripture, we may well expect to hear from the lips of the Christ a volume of them, which shall be charming for their simplicity, and rich in their condensation of saving truth. The veil of obscurity resting over them will be a provocation of inquiry, as it naturally is, when it is known that something of value is concealed. The hunter after hidden treasure shall be rewarded. The parables are not entirely desultory

and disconnected, as they relate to different aspects of the same great theme, the kingdom and its subjects.

Better reasons for the employment for parables need not be sought, but our Lord had not used them in the earlier portion of his ministry; nor did he resort to them until a certain point of resistance on the part of the people had been reached; and the slander had been taken up that he cast out devils through Beelzebub. He had previously used the greatest plainness of speech, such that a wayfaring man though a fool could understand; but the defamation of his person was attended with open contempt for his teaching; and thus led him to draw the veil of parable over his discourses. The censorious critics whose opposition was already a settled matter, not being able to stoop to inquire the meaning of his abstruse sayings, felt their contempt of him increased by this course on his part; but it did not hinder one sincere inquirer; or throw a stumbling block in the way of one, who with an honest spirit approached him. None was more accessible than our Savior; and none knew better when and to whom to communicate. The consequence was that "the wise and prudent saw and perceived not; they heard and understood not." This judgment came upon them as the result of their own self-confidence and inexcusable prejudice. The doctrines which Jesus taught, identical with those of their own sacred books, and distasteful to the natural heart in every age, added to their dislike of him; but above all his claim, not only of equality but of oneness with the eternal Father, seemed to them a tangible and actionable crime, and swallowed up all other objections. As they turned away from him, and manifested their opposition more decidedly; his parables became judicial; and were filled with warning of the fearful ruin awaiting the nation for their rejection of him.

It was at the peril of life, as we learn from the martyrdom of Stephen, that any taught that the temple should be destroyed, and the customs changed; but our Lord taught this in such a manner, that it was impossible to take hold of his words. The parable is a safe vehicle for the conveyance of unwelcome truths. Some things the

Jewish people would not hear at all: the bare mention of them aroused every listener; yet these were the most needful to be heard. It was only by the exercise of the greatest prudence, and the special protection of heaven, that our Lord filled out the measure of his short ministry. This masterly prudence was specially mentioned in the prophetic delineations of him ages before. And yet he so ordered his speech as to announce to them, in the plainest and boldest terms well understood by every auditor, those things which quickened every pulse; and made every heart throb with an intensity of suppressed feeling.

It may be impossible satisfactorily to classify the New Testament parables, nevertheless they form a series covering the whole course of the regenerated soul from its entrance into the spiritual life until the rewards of heaven are reached. Several have reference to the commencement of that life.

A poor man becomes apprised by diligent search of the existence of a hidden treasure ample for all his wants. Keeping the matter a profound secret, he sacrifices all that he has, in order to obtain an honest title to the field that contains it. The scriptures are the field, the favor of God is the treasure, which the seeker gains by sacrifice of all; not given as a price however.

A trader in goodly pearls, possessing many rich ones, at length gets his eye upon one fit to adorn the diadem of a king; and sells all that he has in order to gain it. Men enjoy many choice blessings, among which are reason, health, strength, home, friends and possessions. There is however one gift of God superior in value to them all; to be obtained however only by him who would surrender all to possess it. It is to be secured by the most intelligent and determined resolution.

A man about to build a tower must first sit down, and compute the cost of every material required, and of the labor necessary; and make large allowance for items not enumerated; and be well assured of ample means, before he undertakes the enterprise, if he would avoid mockery.

A king meditating war upon another king, considers well before he begins what may have the gravest issue; and

may terminate in the destruction of his own kingdom. With the most intense application, he will take into view all possible contingencies, before he will give the signal for battle; and if not confident of success, will send an embassy for peace. So before embarking in the spiritual war, the deepest consideration is needful. None need undertake it unless determined to brave the world's scorn and not to quail before the difficulties and contests of a mortal conflict.

Two parables have reference to the manner of receiving the word. Those of the sower and of the two builders. The seed of the word is to be received into a soil unlike the beaten path, thoroughly broken up; having some depth of earth; freed from the weeds and thorns of this world's cares; and it must be "understood," "kept" and watered by the rains of heaven and nourished by its sun: and it will then take hold upon the soil, and grow, and bear fruit manifold.

The description of the two builders may be called the parable of the careless, and the earnest hearer. The one listened to the warnings of the Savior with an easy-going superficial attention, and was ready to build his hope on any foundation which offered present security; while the other was in the deepest earnest about the future; and would trust no foundation whatever but the everlasting rock; and was willing to dig and dig until he found it. His house was placed where no beating rain, nor wind, nor flood could move it. Nothing but the most determined care against insufficient foundations of hope will avail. The house of the careless hearer "fell; and great was the fall of it;" it was a wreck for eternity; the ruin of an undying soul.

Two exhibit the sinner in the very article of conversion. The Pharisee praying in the temple went forward as near to the holy place as he could be allowed to stand; and there offered his boastful prayer. The publican stood just within the outer gate; on the outer line of the court of the Gentiles; and there he could not lift his drooping eyes to heaven, nor make a formal prayer. Looking upon himself as "*the sinner*" above all men, he smote upon his breast

with the action expressive of despair; and uttered a groan for the mercy of a pardoning God. Unaware of the fact that he had made a real prayer for the first time in his life, unaware yet of God's forgiveness, he went down to his house with his aching heart relieved, and his burden left behind.

The other is that of the creditor and the two debtors: one of whom owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. The one most indebted is behind him at the very moment. The fountains of the great deep of her soul are broken up; her tears are falling like rain; and she is mutely expressing agonies of sorrow, and remorse unutterable. No description in words of humility could equal her declaration of it in acts. She is anointing the holy feet, and kissing them with the most tender emotion; making up the lack of service of the scornful host. She is even now being born into the kingdom of purity and holiness. The earth could as easily be torn from its sun, as she separated from her Christ.

Three of them describe the joy of Christ's salvation. The children of the bride-chamber cannot fast, while the bridegroom is with them. "Their tongue is filled with laughter, and their mouth with singing," and "sorrow and sighing are fled away." While Jesus is with them nothing can check the stream of their joy. Persecutions and prisons cannot destroy it; the world cannot take it away. A badge of mourning cannot be worn. Neither can the joy be restricted by any formal rules however long established. The new wine would burst the old bottles with loss; the new piece of cloth not agreeing with the old would, by its greater contraction, tear the old garment; and increase the rent. No rules can be prescribed for the fulness of joy, such as comes with the coming of the holy one into the submissive soul.

A large number of them represent the grace of God in the conversion of the soul. The parable of the great supper seems intended principally to set forth this grace. When all the invited guests prayed to be excused, the Lord sent out his servants into the streets and lanes of the city with orders to bring in the poor, the lame and

the blind and directed them: "go out in the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in." The orders translated into other words ran, accept the excuses of such as plead their worldly business and cares; but take no excuses from those who plead their unfitness, filth and low condition. Their mouths will also be filled with excuses on account of their unworthiness, poverty, squalor and rags, and their not being in agreement with the brilliant preparations of the house; but especially with excuses drawn from their ignorance of the master of the feast, and their own unreasonable hostility, and previous hatred of him. Pay no attention to such excuses; but bring them in; and if need be lay hold of them, and compel them to come in: suffer no such one to escape and absent himself: compel him: "that my house may be filled."

The three in Lv. xv, magnify the grace of God in the recovery of the lost. The woman who had lost a piece of silver, the shepherd who had lost one of his flock, the father who had lost a son represent God. A spirit, a miniature of himself, is lost: a soul is in peril. Jesus has lost one who might swell a loud note in the song which no angel, nor unredeemed sinner can learn. He has lost a son not for the present short life, but the life of the ever-rolling ages: a jewel out of the starry crown. Heaven is moved at the loss: God is seeking his banished one. In the search of the housewife with the broom, in the prolonged hunt of the shepherd, in the famine which overtook the wanderer in the far country, we are beholding the movement of Providence for the restoration of his banished. When at length his return is secured, the joy of angels, the joy of the forgiven soul itself is slight compared with the deeper, more intense delight that moves in the heart of God.

The imagery is wholly different in the parable of the strong man armed keeping his palace. There sin, like a raging tyrant, sits upon his flinty throne, armed with all the deceptive teachings of false philosophy, and all the discoveries of boasting science, and aided by all the powers of evil, and in full alliance with the prince of darkness, defying heaven. There could be no hope in the case, were

it not that there is a stronger than he, who can come upon him, and take from him his armor wherein he trusted, and divide his spoil. The all-conquering son of God can deliver the prey out of the teeth of the mighty: as he set at liberty the poor demoniac of Gadara. These all magnify the grace of God, and represent the conversion of the soul to be his work, who built the lofty skies, and spread the earth abroad.

The views of Christ entertained by his redeemed ones are given in parables. He is the light of the soul, its sun with healing in its beams. He is its shepherd. A king is too distant a personage, never known to his subjects, nor known of them. Jesus is a shepherd knowing his own intimately, calling each by name; and known of them. His sheep are never driven, but led; he himself going before them whether it be to duty or to death. The life of the shepherd is devoted to his flock: he leads them to pasture, defends them from enemies, secures them in the fold at night, and has been known to give his life for them.

Jesus is the vine; believers are the branches. He is the life-root of humanity, as Adam was its death-root. The whole office of the vine is to minister life and support to the branches. The Holy Spirit is the life-giving sap flowing from the root to every branch and to every leaf, each of which has a direct and vital connection with the root. Men become branches by ingrafting or inoculation.

Several describe the fruits of conversion, as that of the tree and its fruit. The good tree of the Holy Spirit cannot bear corrupt fruit; while the corrupt tree of human nature cannot bear good fruit. The tree is known by its fruit. The only way to make a corrupt tree good is to engraft a scion of heavenly growth; and in time cut away the whole original head. This takes place in regeneration and sanctification. The tree, that bears no good fruit after every encouragement of culture, is to be cut down as a cumberer of the ground. God may wait upon it for years, but the decree will go forth against it.

Salt is good while it retains its saltness; should it lose its savor, it is not even fit for the dunghill, but men cast it out.

Christians are to give light: they are as lamps which Christ has lighted. Having first the inward light, they must radiate it in their spheres. Men understand that the light is of heavenly origin, and glorify our Father which is in heaven.

Another result of conversion is growth of the divine seed. A living seed will surely grow. First comes the tiny blade becoming strong enough to support an ear, and afterwards appears the full corn in the ear. Conversion is the introduction of the germ of a new life which will in time take possession of the whole being.

This is again represented by the mustard seed which from being the smallest of seeds becomes a shrub emulating a tree, and affording shelter to the birds. This heavenly germ has the activity and pervasiveness of leaven; a small portion of which, hidden in the body of meal, soon discloses its presence, and affects every particle of the mass. So the religion of Christ has a vitality, by which it penetrates the whole subject.

Another fruit is prayer, real, importunate and prevailing, to which all others than Christians are strangers. The parables illustrating this are the importunate friend asking loaves, and the importunate widow, who without influence or support has none to apply to but a judge destitute of feeling for men or care for God; nevertheless she prevails by sheer importunity. The point of the parable is that in the estimation of the world God is as forbidding a sovereign as the unjust judge; a being in whom there is nothing encouraging us to approach him. There is pathos in the inquiry: "when he cometh" to bless "shall he find faith?" No; he must bless us in our unbelief, or not at all. Want of faith in those who apply to him is still the sad complaint, as it was while he was with men on the earth two thousand years ago.

Still another fruit of Christianity is works of aid to our fellow-men; illustrated by the parable of the good Samaritan, teaching us to look upon every man, and deal with him as a brother; be he a stranger, or of a hostile race.

The church of Christ contributes thus millions of aid by way of charity to missions. It is the only religion bearing this fruit.

A Christian is to be like the unjust steward, scattering his master's goods without the restraint of personal ownership. He gives to his Lord what is his own; himself being but a steward, liable at any moment to be dispossessed.

His attitude is to be that of one who is watching for the return of his absent lord, who may at any moment surprise him by the announcement of his presence, and a call for his accounts. The one, who hoards his possessions for his own enjoyment, refusing utterly to distribute for the honor of God and good of men, is taking a perilous position. Provoked by his avarice, God may suddenly call him away, branding him upon the forehead as it were, "thou fool."

Many describe the separations of the last day. The net is cast into the sea, and gathers of every kind; the good are retained, the bad are cast away.

The five foolish virgins, who made no adequate preparation for their watch, are excluded from the entertainment.

The tares, undistinguishable from the precious wheat until the fruit made its appearance, are gathered and cast into the fire.

Of the two sons, one labored in his father's vineyard after bluntly refusing at first. The other, though full of promise, did not only not obey, but refused to repent after seeing his brother's compliance, and thus proved himself incorrigible, and a proper subject for rejection.

The two parables of the talents and the pounds, or the one parable varied to suit varying occasions, illustrates the rigid scrutiny awaiting the professed servants of God, and the consequent rewards and punishments. They closely discriminate character; and assign corresponding acceptance or censure. The pounds were distributed to each "according to his several ability;" and the rewards followed according to each man's several capacity. There was a difference of measure between the vessels of service: but each capacity was filled.

Another parable, that of the laborers hired into the vineyard at different hours, seems to teach that all shall be rewarded alike: "to every man a penny;" alike in that each man's joy shall be full. The unprofitable servant meets only rebuke and loss.

The clearest revelation, however, of the retributions of the future is afforded by the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. When our Lord would set before us a picture of the world of woe, he does not select as the sufferer some vile malefactor abhorred and rejected from human society; but one from the highest and most respectable class; a rich man living in lavish luxury, against whom nothing can be said, except that he showed no compassion toward the poor and helpless object lying at his gate, and fighting with the dogs for the crumbs thrown out. And he selects for his example of a favorite of heaven, next to Abraham himself, a poor outcast beggar, whom none but the dogs pitied and fellowshipped. Such is the judgment of heaven on behalf of one from the lowest class, as against one whom the world respected and flattered. The poor beggar is accepted; and the rich Pharisee is rejected, to be fuel for the eternal flame. The parable was spoken in the audience of the very class described in it; and came to them with a close application, from which there was no escape. This is ever an unwelcome subject; and our Lord's emphasis of perdition was in words which no man would dare to use, foretelling a ruin surpassing in its horrors all that eye has seen, or ear heard, or that it ever entered into the heart of man to conceive. He is the only messenger ever come from the great unseen.

Then there were subjects, the simple mention of which was followed by tumult; and made things to wear a threatening appearance immediately. Such was the personality of our Lord; and the rejection of the nation for their rejection of him. Both these subjects angered the Jews to a white heat. For less offensive declarations, prophets had been slaughtered.

The parable of the husbandmen and the vineyard may almost be called an Old Testament parable; it was so similar to one uttered by Isaiah v. ch.; and it was evidently well

understood by all who heard it. Our Lord added to it circumstances suiting the assembly before him, and the occasion; which required no interpreter. All perceived that it plainly stated the divine sonship of the speaker, and the rejection of the chosen people; and it must have been listened to with suppressed passion; and must have fallen upon their hearts like a lash upon naked and quivering flesh.

Then the similar parable, of the king making a marriage feast for his son, conveyed the same hated truths. Jesus himself was the king's son, and avenged the insult to his messengers by "sending forth his armies, and destroying those murderers, and burning up their city."

The story of the stone which the builders rejected is said to have been a real incident in the construction of Solomon's temple; and doubtless was such, or it would not have been used by the master. The rejected stone became the crown and complement of the whole work. As he used the incident, it represented the stone of stumbling, over which Israel fell; and he significantly added: "on whomsoever it shall fall it will grind him to powder," thus predicting the utter ruin of those who opposed him. Here no interpreter was needed. He was protected by the parabolic form of his speech; but the fear of him was certainly upon the people. A smothered volcano was under his feet: but his hour had not come.

The parable of the nobleman going to a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return, was appropriately delivered at Jericho, as that was the point from which Archelaus commenced his journey to Rome. The slaying of those who opposed his accession was undoubtedly a fact. It was impossible to misunderstand the parable. Jesus was to be king; and his enemies were to be slain. Indeed, about this time he openly spoke of himself as king without a parable. *Matt. xxv: 31-40.*

The parable of the unclean spirit who left his house, and found no rest elsewhere; and returning found it swept and garnished, but without an occupant; and took with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and entering in dwelt there, belongs to this place, as describing results

then appearing. That generation, seeming for a time to be outwardly reformed, became sevenfold worse in moral degeneracy; and thus ripe for the destruction which awaited them, and which was delayed for forty years by the intercession of him whom they crucified.

We are overcome with amazement at the unparalleled boldness, prudencé, skill and tact of the great teacher. He certainly was the beau idéal of all that is lovely, commanding and admirable in human character. While announcing in the plainest terms truths, which could be received by a Jewish assembly only with heart-burnings and gnashing of teeth; he was yet unharmed. The fear of him imposed an invincible restraint. Even this barrier was at length overcome however; for their rage against him rose to a flood-tide of desperation which swept aside all obstructions; and brought them into deadly assault upon him. In many of these brief and life-like delineations himself is the central figure; standing forth in all the indescribable yearnings of that love, which brought him from the skies, to seek and to save that which was lost.

In others he covers the whole history of the kingdom of God in the soul of man; from the first movement of return to its allegiance to its God and king, onward. All is comprised in a very small compass; but volumes are required for its exposition. They are mines of condensed truth, suited to that time and that people; but equally to all times and all people. They are gems of glittering light in the firmament of truth. The whole gospel is contained in them; and from them the way of life can be learned, with descriptions of the whole journey.

CHAPTER XLVI.

DID OUR LORD TEACH IN HEBREW OR IN GREEK?

CRITICAL.

This is a very interesting as well as an important question. It is desirable to know if we have his own words just as they fell from his lips; or are receiving a translation of them at second hand. There are reasons for believing that he taught in the same dialect in which they are recorded. While Jerusalem was the religious capital of the Jewish race; and its inhabitants retained with prejudice their own Aramaic; so that Greek was rarely spoken there, as is learned from Acts xxvii, 37-40; yet their really chief city, the headquarters of their industrial and commercial life, was Alexandria in Egypt. It held a prominence such as is enjoyed by Chicago, in Illinois, and New York City, in New York. It was the hive of their industries, the centre of their activities, the seat of learning and culture. Its standing as a seat of letters was more eminent than its position as a mart of commerce; and its Greek diffused itself as the language of cultivation, as well as of business and trade. Of course it could never supplant the Hebrew in Jerusalem and Judea, where the continuance of the ancient institutions demanded the perpetuation of the sacred language, it being the home of their worship. But as a consequence the Greek language was encroaching continually; and prevailed in Galilee of the Gentiles, possibly.

It is a tradition of the third or fourth century that the gospel by Matthew was originally written in Hebrew; and that in it alone were the exact words of the Savior recorded. Had this been the case, the intrinsic value of the gospel would have secured its perpetuation; as to every-

thing connected in the remotest manner with the master, the Christian heart vibrates like the Æolian harp to the slightest breath of wind.

There is, however, internal evidence that our gospel is not a translation. If a Hebrew gospel existed, which no one will pronounce impossible, it is the translation, and the Greek the original. Had Matthew written in Hebrew, every citation from the Old Testament would have been given in the identical Hebrew words of inspiration; which the translator, who is but a verbal copyist, would have rendered closely. This method of quotation, however, is not the method of the first gospel. The quotations are rather paraphrases than translations. The words and sometimes the sense is varied: there is no trace of adherence to the Hebrew. Neither does he follow the Septuagint closely. An example is the quotation from Micah, v: 1, which the Septuagint renders: "But thou Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the princes of Judah." But Matthew gives it: "But thou Bethlehem in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah," varying both the words and the sense.

This manner of quotation proves satisfactorily, that the Greek is not a translation of an earlier Hebrew document; but the work of the apostle himself; as no translator would take such liberty with the inspired text. Matthew himself is then the author of the Greek gospel bearing his name: even if he himself issued a Hebrew version in his day.

Matthew's method is the more striking from the fact, that when he repeats Christ's own citations, he adheres closely to the Septuagint. When it is affirmed, that our Lord's quotations of scripture were made from the Septuagint: it is not to be understood that he adhered rigidly to every word of the Greek. At times he varied for cause. He took the same liberty with the Hebrew: as when on the cross he repeated the first verse of the twenty-second psalm, he substituted a common and intelligible word Sabachthani for an obsolete one.

What can be affirmed is, that he so far adhered to the words of the seventy; as to show that theirs was the book

he used. Indeed he follows the Septuagint where it varies from the Hebrew, erroneously, too. As an instance, he was in the synagogue of Nazareth on the day of atonement, and stood up and read a portion of verses assigned to him, contained in Is. LXI of King James' bible. He read it *verbatim et literatim* as it stands in the Septuagint; retaining the phrase incorrectly translated, "the recovering of sight to the blind." The sentiment, however, was unobjectionable, and was therefore retained; he added, however, the correct rendering of the phrase: "to set at liberty them that are bruised." There is no escape from the admission that he was reading from the Septuagint Bible, giving, however, to the Hebrew the supreme authority.

This is one among many evidences, that the seventy translators were much more familiar with the Greek, than they were with their own Hebrew dialect. Their version is defective throughout, and undeniably so, on account of their ignorance of Hebrew. A smatterer might translate *laasoorim pekah koh*, recovery of sight to the blind, *assoorim* never meaning blind. To such an extent had the Greek supplanted.

Our Lord would not probably read in a language only partially understood by the audience, and requiring the assistance of a Targumist ever at the side of the reader, to render into the vernacular the obscurities of the ancient language. Now, when we find in all Christ's quotations from the Jewish scriptures, by whatever evangelist, even by Matthew, who takes the greatest liberty of citation, a close adherence to the words of the Greek bible, a strong argument is encountered in favor of his habitual use of that language in his teaching. It can but be asked, was not the Septuagint the volume used in the synagogue of Nazareth?

It is admitted that inspiration, in order to be plenary, must be verbal. The promise made to the disciples, was that the Holy Ghost should bring all things to their remembrance, whatsoever Jesus had said unto them. If our Savior delivered his instructions in Hebrew, it was not only necessary to revive the recollection of the words used by him; but also to suggest suitable words in another tongue

not kindred. Bringing to remembrance was but a small part of the work. The supposition that they heard in one language, and reported in another, seems to remove the Savior to a greater distance from us. That he should choose for the vehicle of his instructions a dialect restricted in its territorial extent, suffering continual change, to the rejection of another universal in its dissemination, at the zenith of its purity, does not commend itself to our judgment. Knowing that his gospel would be perpetuated in the Greek to the end of time, is it not reasonable to suppose that his instructions would be delivered in that language, which was to convey his doctrines to the ends of the earth, and through all the revolving periods of its history? The Hebrew was the language of a hated people; the Greek pervaded the world, farther even than the Roman eagles had flown. Can it be thought that his gospel would be committed to a tongue destined shortly to be modified and lost in the dispersion and demoralization of those who used it; until Jews from different parts of the same continent hardly understand one another in their own mother tongue?

The use of the Greek language in Israel was far more extensive than is generally admitted. The possession of an authorized version of the Scriptures in a form intelligible to the mass of the people, would contribute more than any single cause to the propagation of the language. This bible had been in their hands for two hundred and fifty years, and had won its way to general acceptance. And then their religious literature had for all those years been in Greek, and Greek only; as the apocryphal books demonstrate. There were no longer any fresh Hebrew writings except the Talmuds: records composed one at Jerusalem and another at Babylon by their priests and rabbis.

The Greek had become the language of their religion. Even the name, by which their supreme council was designated, was no longer Hebrew; but Greek: Sanhedrin.

The prevalence of Greek in domestic use can be infallibly ascertained by the proportion of Greek names found among the families. Such were Andrew, Philip, Stephen, Nicodemus, Apollos, Sosthenes and others, occurring in the his-

tory. Many had two names, a Hebrew and a Greek; as Simon Peter, John Mark, Herod Antipas, Herod Philip, Jesus, who is called Justus. Now when a language has invaded a community, until the common people adopt it in naming their children, it has come near usurping the place of the national tongue. At all events in such cases, it had become the language of the household.

The reasonable desire of the church is to hear the very words which Jesus spoke; and we have them in the gospels just as his lips delivered them. So great is the verbal identity of the discourses recorded by Matthew and Mark, that one seems an epitome of the other. But the universal voice of tradition is that they are the work of independent authors, written in different parts of the world, and for different readers. Their agreement shows, that the writers are remembering by inspiration, and reporting the identical words of the master. The same agreement appears in the narrative of Luke. When he repeats the history of an incident related by the others, the words attributed by him to the master are often identical with those furnished by the former historians. The correspondence is sufficient for a strong conviction.

Variations are found, as for instance in the Lord's prayer; but not greater than Jesus himself would make on different occasions; as he probably repeated it more than once. Those variations may have been intentional; to teach us not to rely upon rigid compliance with any cast-iron form of words. We are not to pray in these words, but "after this manner." The greatest diversity between the two accounts is the omission of the doxology by Luke. But it is not wise to repudiate the doxology on this account. Ancient transcribers have unquestionably dropped from the record verses and larger portions which seemed to them objectionable; but it is not to be supposed that they would dare to foist into the text words unauthorized and uninspired in face of the curse contained in Rev. xxii: 18-19. The accepted canon of criticism, which asserts the possibility of such addition, is not trustworthy. In other words, there is sufficient authority for the doxology in the fact, that it occurs in the gospel written by Matthew.

It is not easily supposable that the prayer was given originally in Aramaic in words long since lost, to be perpetuated to the end of time in a translation. Our Lord would certainly give the form of prayer, which was to endure.

The following arguments seem sufficient to establish that our Savior, from the beginning of his ministry, generally made use of the Greek language in his instructions.

1. The terminology of the new dispensation was to be settled. This was a matter of vital importance; and it surely devolved upon him to determine the technical words of the new era. Terms were to be fixed proper to convey the new ideas. The preaching of the Baptist had been doubtless in the Aramaic: Greek terms were to be chosen to express the Christian ideas of faith, repentance, regeneration, humility, salvation, etc., and who was to settle authoritatively the new nomenclature? The name of the office of the twelve was to be selected; and it is stated that our Lord chose the name *ἀποστόλους*. Three Hebrew words suggest themselves at once, which might have been properly used as a designation: but the word really used is lost, if it were ever established in the Hebrew tongue. It was incumbent on him also to determine the title by which himself would be known: *ὁ χριστός*. Josephus tells us that he was popularly known as *ὁ χριστός*; and not by the Hebrew word equivalent. This he himself undoubtedly determined. He calls himself by this title; when at Cæsarea-Philippi, “he charged them, that they should tell no man; that he was Jesus the Christ.” This conversation at Cæsarea-Philippi was unquestionably held in the Greek language, as will appear, when the encomium of Peter is considered further on.

If this selection of appropriate terms were made in the Hebrew; it was to be repeated in the Greek: the former were to be lost and forgotten; while the other were to remain during all time. It is impossible to overestimate the importance of this work. One of the greatest difficulties encountered by missionaries in carrying the gospel to heathen tribes, has been found in the selection of the words best adapted to represent the ideas of Christianity. The

words first chosen have sometimes been relinquished for others less objectionable from an idolatrous association. While the disciples of Jesus were unaware of the far-reach of his slightest acts, he was, with full survey of the future, laying foundation stones in a heathen tongue, to receive the superstructure of an entire theology. If he selected the term *ἀωοστόλους*, as it is expressly stated he did, he fixed the whole Christian vocabulary in that language.

2. On certain occasions he held interviews with those who spoke only the Greek. That such a one was Pontius Pilate is probable from Lu. xxii: 6, translated in the authorized version: "When Pilate heard of Galilee;" literally when Pilate heard Galilee. The high priest had probably addressed the governor in Greek, in which tongue he was not as fluent as when he stood before Herod, and used his own vernacular. The accusation was taken up by the crowd: "He stirreth up the people from Galilee." Pilate's ear caught the word Galilee repeated by every mouth. This word he would easily recognize, if he did not catch distinctly the sense of the complainants. It is possible that he did not understand the Hebrew sufficiently to conduct a conversation in it. It is recorded that he held an interview with his prisoner in private within the hall, to which he had had him conducted; besides addressing to him two questions in public. All of this communication must have taken place in Greek, which all Roman officers from the centurion upward were able to use.

Another instance in point is the Syrophenician woman, who is said to have been a Greek. It is difficult to discover why she is so called, except it be for the reason that this was her language. The names Jew and Greek included the world; because outside of Judea all spoke Greek. Had she made use of the Phenician dialect, it is impossible to frame a reason for calling her a Greek. The conclusion must be that the intercourse between her and the master was in Greek.

Another instance which confirms this argument is found in John xii. Certain Greeks, veritable heathen-born Hellenes, not Grecising Jews, not being able to understand Hebrew, had applied to Philip, whose vernacular was

probably Greek, for an introduction to Jesus. The discourse in John xii, one of the most solemn and weighty, was delivered for their benefit, and addressed to them personally; that in the few words, to which they were privileged to listen, they might take with them the great and only doctrine of the gospel. "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me," might have been most appropriately uttered in the Greek; and the response of the Father from the sky may have been in the identical Greek words attributed to him. Jesus was the vindicator of the Gentiles; in the subjects of his miracles he made no distinction between Jew and Gentile, and in the temple he twice cleansed the court of the Gentiles.

This conclusion is fortified by those passages, in which Hebrew words occur untranslated. If our Savior's whole discourses had been given in that dialect, no such isolated words would be found. If he taught in Greek, and introduced only here and there words of Hebrew; they would be given as such in the history: just for the same reason and in the same manner as they stand untranslated in the English bible. Their occurrence is proof, that he was speaking in another language, and introducing Hebrew expressions for cause. Examples of this are *Raca*, in the sermon on the mount, a term of reproach audible on every hand; *Corban*, a thing devoted, a technical word, and *Amen*, *Amen*, which might better have been transferred in our version than translated. Had he been speaking in Hebrew and used these words, they would undoubtedly have been found translated in the Greek.

Passages of the gospel history contain Jewish colloquial: as when he said to Jairus' little daughter, "Talitha Cumi." Aramaic was the language of the household. So to a deaf and dumb man brought to him in a remote region of the country, he said, "Epphatha." The friends from his native village used this language. These words of colloquial Hebrew are reported; because it was not his custom to use that language.

His prayer in Gethsemane was addressed to *Abbâ ô πατηρ*. He was evidently praying in the Greek; and used a word of familiar endearment from the Hebrew, which stands un-

translated in the Greek account, just as it does in the English gospel, and for the same reason. His exclamation on the cross, "Eli! Eli! lama sabachthani," was uttered in the words of David to call attention to that 22d Psalm, which gave a view of the scene then transpiring as vivid and distinct as if taken by an observer on the spot; and the words, "it is finished," he uttered in Greek, *τετέλεσται*: they would have been given in Hebrew, had he uttered them in that tongue. An additional reason exists for affirming that he committed his soul into his Father's hands in words of Greek: because the words are a literal quotation from the Septuagint.

Some eminent linguists, unable to concede that our Savior taught in Greek, must translate his words back into the Hebrew, in order to interpret them correctly. One of such, at a certain time, delivered a seminary lecture on the word *ἀνωθεν*, John iii: 3, on the ground that the word used by Christ was *Mimmaul*, (from heaven) when Nicodemus correctly understood it to mean "a second time," as though much depended on our having the identical words of the interview. These we do have unquestionably. Such a course is to mystify, and not to interpret.

Other passages might be named, not included in this classification, which strongly prove that our Savior used the Gentile language continually. One is the encomium bestowed on Peter at Cæsarea Philippi: "Thou art Peter," not Cephas, as would have been the designation had he been speaking in Hebrew; "and on this rock will I build my church." The beautiful play upon the words, wholly lost in the English, but very effective in the original by reason of the change in gender and form impossible to be expressed in the Hebrew, demonstrate that he was as usual speaking in the Greek. The rock, on which the church was to be built, was the truth confessed by Peter, which he was firm as a rock in believing. Unstable often in other things, we know that he was; in his conviction of this truth, he was immovable, as the pillars of the sky.

John vi: 31, is another passage which demonstrates that our Savior used the Greek in his vindication of himself before the council, after the healing of the impotent man.

“Search the scriptures.” The expression “scriptures” is of Greek derivation, the Hebrew language having no word equivalent to *γραφαί*. Neither has the language ever possessed a word exactly translating the Greek word used by the evangelist. Had our Lord made his defense in Hebrew, he would have said: “Search the law, and the prophets, and the Psalms,” and could not have expressed his meaning in any other words. This most solemn and weighty defense must then have been made in Jerusalem, and before the supreme council in the Gentile language. There is no apparent escape from the admission.

Of course the position taken in this paper does not require us to deny that he sometimes, perhaps often, used the language of his people. When Hebrew was the family speech, he used it. In villages remote from the centre, and before those who would better receive his instructions, if delivered in the sacred language, he used it. Perhaps in the centres where the Hebrew yet held its sway, he conformed to the dialect in use. But his discourses come to us in the very words which fell from his lips. No further inspiration was required by the historians of his life, than such as would revive the remembrance of his speech as distinctly as though they were hearing it on the instant; and would preserve them in their selection of facts and instructions from error of judgment as to what was needed to the end of time by the world for its salvation. Such clear and vivid recollection has in some instances been produced by other causes than inspiration.

CHAPTER XLVII.

INDIVIDUALITY OF THE EVANGELISTS.

The estimate, which the world forms of a prominent man's character, depends largely upon his biographer. If he has made his mark upon the history of his time, that record is ineffaceable and is known and read of all men; but tradition busies itself with all that goes to make up his personality; his youthful training, his surroundings, the influences from without, as well as the impulses from within, which make him what he is; and transfers the picture to the tablets of history; provided the individual be of sufficient importance to justify the effort. The faithfulness of delineation depends upon the truth and impartiality of the recorder; but as much upon his capacity to comprehend the subject of his memoir. In this sense no human biographer was competent to furnish a full account of Jesus of Nazareth; as being too multifold, too vast in all directions, too original and yet too simple. After the attempt of four of his intimates to portray him failed in their own view to convey the full impression, they conclude with the apology that if all he had done should be written, the "world could not contain the books that should be written."

Each of these writers had his own conception of what constituted the ideal of all excellence; and therefore each has given the leading characteristics of what to him formed the brightness of the glory of his Lord's appearance; and it may be useful to us to analyze and compare their impressions. The attempt will give us a fuller view of the illustrious subject.

1. The principal thing before the mind of Matthew was his kingly claim and corresponding authority. In consequence he in the very first place traces his royal descent;

as he was in the direct line of the kings of Judah, through their unbroken succession to the time of the captivity: when Jehoiachin's son born in Babylon Salathiel became the heir without a throne; whose son Zerubbabel was the leader of the returning exiles, though he did not assume the title of king. Yet the legal succession was in him, and descended by primogeniture to Joseph the legal and reputed father of Jesus. This was a point of supreme importance to the Jew, for whom Matthew seems to have composed his history. He further related how Jesus was proclaimed King of the Jews in the very court of Herod, by the wise men from the east; the justification of the designation being written in the sky. These travelers from the hoary east understood the quality of his kingdom; as they had come "to worship him." Like the true heir in many another instance, perils of the sword force him from his home and country, to be a wanderer in other lands.

Being at length anointed not by the chrism of the priest, or the holy oil of earth, but by the Holy Ghost at the hand of the Father, he stands forth in his full royalty introducing "the kingdom of heaven" upon earth, a phrase used by this evangelist only. Jesus has the power to bless, and to pronounce authoritatively who are blessed; and to separate the precious from the vile. Expounding the law of God with a prerogative becoming its giver, the people are amazed at his authority: undistinguishable from that of the law itself. The listeners hear the tone of a king in his words. Not only do his precepts take hold of the heart and conscience as eternal truth and right alone can; but there is something about his personality that astonishes all who approach him. His individuality possessed a weight such as never attached before to one born of woman, there was in him a force of character that is utterly inexplicable. Buried under a thick veil of humility, concealed beneath an aspect of ineffable kindness and love, there is a latent power such as attends no human majesty. Every hearer is convinced at once that he is lord of the conscience. No miracle or sign is needed to authenticate him; his credentials are unquestionable: the heart responds to him at once, and quivers with a strange adoration.

Miracles, however, are not withheld; but signs and wonders and mighty works are wrought by him on every occasion. In Matthew's account of them, we hear the sharp decisive word of command from the lips of the master all the time. His words are: "*I will* be then clean." "He cast out the spirits with his *word*," "he *rebuked* the wind and the sea." The authority of the centurion of Capernaum, illustrating that of Christ, is more sharply decisive than in Luke; and everywhere throughout his gospel, the prominent idea is that of Christ's universal power exercised at his will over all the departments of nature, over all the disorders of humanity, and over the souls as well as the bodies of men. With the word of a king there is power; and as we follow Matthew, we are hearing the voice of authority in every act effectual. To reject the testimony of these miracles is to commit the unpardonable blasphemy, of which this evangelist treats at greater length, detailing the occasion of its occurrence, and confirming the impression that he was writing especially for his own people.

Some things fastened themselves in his memory, which appear to have been overlooked by the other evangelists, relating to our Savior's description of himself. He asserts his superiority in ways full of meaning to the Jew, when he claims to be "greater than the temple," and "Lord of the Sabbath-day;" its institutor and sovereign. Of like force to the Jew were his words describing himself as greater than Jonas, at whose preaching returned from the dead, the men of Nineveh repented; not a greater man but a being of a different order: the Greek word is neuter. So he pronounced himself a mere foot wanderer greater than Solomon, their wisest, greatest King: not a greater man but a being of a higher order. The Jew would feel the force of words like these: "Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily, I say unto you that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see the things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear the things which ye hear, and have not heard them." Others of like import might be quoted: they struck Matthew with

peculiar force, as did everything relating to the high dignity of his master, and his superiority to all that had ever trodden this earth.

This evangelist remembers also most of the teachings of our Lord, in which he stands out revealed as the final judge of quick and dead, on whose decision hangs the destiny of every human being. He is sovereign of a kingdom which dominates the invisible, and reaches through eternity. Reference to the great day of accounts is continually sounding in his pages, when the great King of men and of angels shall settle the unchanging doom of the inhabitants of more than our little world.

In the history of the last eventful days, Matthew gives us a glowing account of the regal entry into Jerusalem. Such a welcome as was accorded his master was never given to the mightiest monarch of his line, entering along the slope of Olivet. He was hailed as the son of David and the hope of Israel; and the mighty shout aroused the city. He publicly vindicated the title, and accepted it, and justified the children who filled the temple with their "God save the son of David." We hear him even naming himself King. Matt. xxv: 34-40 and xxii: 2. The apostle proceeds to relate how the opposers were overpowered by the simple personal presence of Jesus; and how they came to him in the most imposing array as rulers of the temple and directors of the sacred things, demanding: "By what authority doest thou these things? who gave thee this authority?" and how they slunk away for fear of being stoned by the people, if they had spoken outright what they might have privately avowed. Such ready and overwhelming answers to gainsayers never issued from human lips.

When the story of his death is reached, Matthew adds some particulars to the account, being testimonies to the divine majesty of the sufferer, such as the immediate and awful suicide of Judas, the divine warning to Pilate through his wife, Pilate's solemn washing of his hands before the multitude, and his vain protest against the condemnation; and he describes more fully than the others the prodigies accompanying the death, which were true portents, and never occurred in connection with any other event.

He gives us a most vivid picture of the resurrection scene, and while he does not narrate the ascension, emphasizes the last command to preach the gospel to all nations with the promise of his perpetual presence with the church to the end of the world; so that it stands out with the utmost distinctness, as the orders of a king, to whom all power is given in heaven and on earth. In his setting aside the traditions so religiously observed by the Jews, and his interpretation of the clean and the unclean, and of marriage and divorce, our Lord was deciding judicially as a King, and enunciating principles which will shape human society the world over, and regulate it to the end of time. It is generally conceded that this evangelist relates events in the true order of their occurrence, not beginning, however, with the commencement of Christ's ministry, but just before his own call to the apostolate, which did not take place until about a year later.

There is in this gospel an elevation of tone that is unsurpassed, and a continual homage to Jesus Christ that carries all hearts with it. The heart of the writer was burning all the time with devotion to the holy master, whom he was describing; and his soul was on fire with the sublimest conceptions of his divine majesty. As his story is read with any degree of sympathy, the soul of the reader is caught up as it were in the chariots of Amminadib; and a deep insight is gained into the glory of the King, whom God has set upon his holy hill of Zion.

2. The next gospel in the order is that of Mark, which appears on a cursory reading to be but an epitome of the publican's history; but on closer examination proves quite otherwise: it furnishes in some of its reports of the words of the Master valuable amplifications, and brings to our notice two miracles not related by either of the other evangelists. In the account also of many of the mighty works, this writer is found to have added here and there a new particular not contained in the other histories. and in every case this addition is the very cream of the whole description. To the story of the others Mark appends perhaps not more than a half dozen words; but these few words furnish the climax of the whole transaction; and give

an indescribable vividness and reality to the account. They are like the last touch of the painter's brush to the picture: revealing by a single stroke of genius the crowning beauty of the work, though it may have appeared complete before. In some instances, by a single added word, as by a lightning flash, he discovers to us a whole sky of unlooked-for tenderness and love.

This feature of the gospel identifies the writer as a man, to whom the great reason, the one reason for receiving Jesus of Nazareth as a divinely commissioned teacher was found in the miracles which he wrought. These were to him infallible "signs" of his mission, divine credentials commanding unhesitating submission; and he certainly was keenly alive to their appreciation. He had the finest perception of what constituted the highest glory and the noblest beauty of each miracle; and realized its force as though himself were the subject benefitted. Every touch of Christ's omnipotence, every word of his power thrilled through his own soul, and left him as much overwhelmed with gratitude and wonder, as was the recipient. It is astonishing how he caught the inspiration of each miracle, and each interview, and proves himself to have been in closer sympathy with the great healer and teacher, than any other of his attendants.

He also observed the little personal acts of the healer much more closely than did any other of the four historians. For instance, eight times he mentions the fact, that Jesus looked upon those whom he addressed. There was doubtless meaning in his look, in his long and steady gaze, sometimes of reproof, when not a word besides was needed to convey his meaning; sometimes of unfathomable compassion and ineffable kindness. Indeed his countenance must have been singularly capable of expressing compassion; and must often have taken on a look which all recognized as revealing the deepest emotions of mercy. Mark notices it more than once. The eyes of this writer took in the varying expressions of his Lord's countenance, and received from them by an intuition the emphasis of his statements.

He notices also the movement of the hands, the stretching of them out, and the laying of them on those who applied. Our Lord had a habit of laying his hands upon all who approached him for benefits; upon the poor in their rags, upon the leper in his pollution; even upon those whose touch might be considered infectious; upon the little children; upon the blind beggars; even upon the corpse. Little as such an act may appear, yet it is of vast significance; for such a movement expresses feeling better than words can. Love caresses with the hand, pity sympathizes with the hand; when the heart warms towards its object, the hand goes out in harmony with it. It shows that we do not feel ourselves above those who seek our aid; that we condescend to men of low estate; and put ourselves upon an equality with the poor and lowly. He observed also the groaning and sighing and upward turning of the eyes, to heaven, which no other has recorded.

This evangelist is hereby shown to have been an eye-witness of all from the beginning of the ministry, which Mark was not. The author of this gospel is none other than Peter. This conviction becomes a certainty, when we read the words describing Peter's state of mind at the time of the transfiguration; when it is said of him, after his proposal to make three tabernacles; that "he wist not what to say;" an expression which no one could make about him, and which must have been made by Peter himself. So also after his denial of his master, the expression occurs: "When he thought thereon he wept;" the meaning of the word being that his mind was fixed upon his crime to the forgetfulness of all else; of the surroundings, of the danger, of the presence of others. Such descriptions could come from none other than Peter himself. He is the man ever carried away by the interests of the present hour, indeed with the liveliest perception, taking in the full influence of the present occasion, and completely surrendered to what is passing before his eyes. He beholds Jesus; all beside is inferior and subsidiary. He is the one centre of interest.

3. The next in order is Luke, whom, we learn from the epistle to the Collossians to have been a gentile; and as he was personally acquainted with those in Colosse, to whom

Paul was writing, he may have been formerly a resident of their city. His attachment to the apostle was, it seems, very close and lasting. Not long after the establishment of Christianity, before the fire of opposition on the part of the Hebrew nation had lost any degree of its heat, a young Jew had come to the front as the exponent and supporter of their religion: of splendid abilities, ardent, impetuous, intolerant, and fierce in his zeal for the worship of his nation. His bigotry was more the result of ignorance than malignity: but he was intensely zealous, and thoroughly conscientious withal. His activity placed him at the head of his people, as the representative of the national feeling against the Nazarene and his followers. His breath was threatening and slaughter, and his heart burned as an oven. He monopolized public attention, as the one specially raised up to overthrow the rapidly extending heresy, being fully equipped to reason it down, or failing in this, to burn it out. But this furious partizan, in the very midst of his terrible ministry of death, fell on the road to Damascus to the ground under the sense of unpardonable guilt, and the full conviction of the supreme deity of Jesus Christ. The pardon of his great sin, and his own installation as an apostle electrified the world; and among other results, led to the conversion of this gentile physician, who henceforth became his loving companion in proclaiming the divinity of his master.

His gospel was compiled under the authority of this apostle, hence he does not name places nor individuals, nor observe the order of time; neither of them having been an eye-witness of the facts related. The clew to its understanding is to be found in the wonderful forgiveness of the persecutor. Every similar case, and every illustration of the power and willingness of Christ to pardon sins of the deepest dye, and transgressors of the most revolting character, comes up in all its overpowering magnitude to the amazement of writer and readers. Such treatment of offenders, so foreign to the impulses of our depraved nature as to be almost incomprehensible to the world, forms the great subject matter of this history. It was only after long debate that Saul could believe it possible that he could find par-

don, or that he could venture to pray; and then neither his old associates nor even Christian believers could for a long while receive his conversion as a fact; but Luke finds evidences of the like grace and mercy scattered through all the ministry of the Savior on earth.

The first instance of the readiness of Christ to forgive sins which he relates in the case of the paralytic, who was let down through the tiling of the roof to his presence, and whom he greeted immediately with the forgiveness of his sins before he could ask it; and whose body he restored to its wonted strength, as a proof of his possession of the power to forgive.

It is Luke who gives the memorable history of the woman in the house of Simon the Pharisee, which was a sinner, a tale engraved on the memory of the world. Floods of tears poured from her eyes, she abhorred herself infinitely more than the Pharisee despised her, her grief was too deep for speech, and her love exceeded. Jesus snatched from the depths of pollution one whom a decent man would not permit to touch him, for one of the highest seats in glory. The wonderful love of Christ for sinners is the key note of the account, the union of infinite purity with love for the vilest of men and women, and his readiness to pardon and to cleanse.

This is the only evangelist who furnishes the account of the conversion of Zaccheus, a man outcast from his nation, one who had extorted from the poor, and taken the bread from the mouths of widows and orphans, until his name had become odious. It seemed to his fellow-townsmen a stain upon the character of Jesus, that he should accept entertainment from such an one; but filth and vileness could never pollute *him*. Salvation visited that house, when Jesus entered it. Its master hastened to disgorge his accursed gains, and divide all that he had left with the poor and needy. If there is a vice more deeply entrenched than others in the soul of a sinner, and fortified there by bonds that no human power can sunder, it is avarice. But the captives of the mighty are delivered: Zaccheus escapes from the toils; the net is broken and he is escaped. Never was a human soul so aroused, so quickened, so enlightened, so

speedily and deeply moved; and the change was for life. It is those whom the world has rejected that Jesus seeks, and there is in him salvation for the perishing; he came to seek and to save that which was *lost*. The word means not wandered away, but damned, yet out of hell.

Luke has also preserved for us the account of the dying malefactor, a hardened criminal whom justice had overtaken in his misdeeds. He is led forth to a deserved execution; and while extended upon the cross finds before his view the spectacle of perfect innocence and immaculate holiness, in the strange being suffering at his side. His attention is absorbed in the view to the forgetfulness of his own pains. He becomes convinced that he, who is the sole object of the concentrated derision of the world, as the pretended King of the Jews and the Son of God, is in fact what his enemies represent in their taunts. He beholds a suffering Savior, and at once feels the horror of his own crimes, for which he is enduring the penalty at the hand of men, and with a fearful "looking for of judgement and fiery indignation" at the hand of God. The last sands of his perverted life are running out; and the edge of the crater around the fiery gulf is crumbling beneath his feet; the doom of God is awaiting him; and he thinks, perhaps, this holy sufferer who can pray for the forgiveness of his enemies may possibly forgive a wretch like him. Encouraged by what he has seen and heard he makes his feeble and hesitating application: and lo! the holy one, who answers not taunts, and opens not his mouth to complain, answers him with the most animating, comforting announcement of acceptance ever granted to mortal. How often this writer had heard Paul, with flowing tears and a breaking heart, recount these displays of almighty grace, and to them add his own deliverance and acceptance, to the everlasting wonder of his own soul and of all that heard.

This is the evangelist who has recounted the loud weeping of the Savior in the midst of the hours of his triumphal entry into Jerusalem; as his soul yearned over those who were rejecting the light, and refusing the mercies offered them. His own impending agonies affected him not so much, as the contemplation of their irremediable ruin;

that the gate of mercy was closing against them. He alone recites the prayer which is the astonishment of the ages; "Father forgive them; they know not what they do." He loves men in their sins; when angels are pale in consternation at their deeds, and the earth trembles to hold them, and the sun refuses to look upon their horrid vileness; even then Jesus loves them. Infinite purity and matchless love combined in a glory that exceeds our highest thoughts. "His heart is made of tenderness: his bowels melt with love."

Here comes in properly the parable of the Pharisee and Publican. While the Pharisee went boldly forward into the most consecrated part of the court of Israel to offer his prayer, the Publican but stepped inside the outermost gate of the Gentiles, advancing not a pace. The enclosure comprised several acres; and he stood at the furthest distance possible from the holy place; and standing there he could not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven, weighted as they seemed with heavy guilt; while he offered no set prayer, but the agonized cry burst from his lips, while he smote upon his breast: "God be merciful to me the sinner" of all man kind. This man was justified and accepted; it is such that Jesus came to save; and no powers could rob him of a soul oppressed with a sense of sin's desert, and suing for forgiveness.

The world owes Luke an everlasting debt of gratitude, had he done no more than treasure up for us those inimitable parables of the lost piece of money, the lost sheep, and the lost son. The readiness of Christ to accept the returning sinner, and forgive all his crimes admits of no exaggeration; it baffles all description, it passes all thought; as the bereaved father mourns over the dead, and has forgotten all the ingratitude of the lost one, so and more does Christ yearn for sinners. Words can never tell the whole.

Luke relates parables overlooked by the others which are of the same general import, and contribute to his purpose such as those of the importunate widow, the rich man and Lazarus, and the barren fig tree still spared in its barrenness, with some others not in the same line of teaching.

We find him also noticing everything that is favorable to the calling of the Gentiles. In this connection comes in the account of the Centurion of Capernaum, whose history terminates with the prophecy of the Gentiles coming from the four quarters of the earth to sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, in the Kingdom of heaven, also the parable of the great supper, and that of the husbandmen. Of the same import is the parable of the good Samaritan, the cleansing of the ten lepers, the only grateful one of whom was a Samaritan.

He also recites some miracles not noticed by the others, the raising of the widow's son at Nain, the healing of the bowed woman who could not straighten herself; and he is very full in his description of the crucifixion with the previous and attendant mental sufferings which show a perfect humanity blending with divinity, and demonstrate Luke to have been a physician, and a philosopher as well as a believer.

IV. The fourth and last of these sacred writers is the Apostle John, a man of an entirely different order of mind from the others, indeed the very opposite of some of them. He had companied longer with his master than any, having attended him before he had been called to the apostleship. A disciple of the Baptist, he was one of the two to whom John bore his testimony respecting Jesus, that he was the lamb of God; and from that instant his soul clave to his new master, and he became his inseparable follower. He was with him at Cana of Galilee, and went with him up to Jerusalem on his first visit, and was eye-witness of his cleansing of the temple, and of the various miracles then wrought; heard the whole interview with Nicodemus, and understood the posture of the Jewish mind towards his lord and leader from the outset. He was evidently better acquainted with Jérusalem and all its interests, and the leaders there, and their feelings and course, than any other of the twelve. In some unexplained way he had an interest and connection there unfelt by the others of his company. His gospel is almost entirely taken up with the happenings in that city, and the prejudices and conduct of its residents, and their leaders. He understood the true inwardness of

the men of that capital. When we add to this the fact, that he was admitted to a closer intimacy with the Nazarene than his fellow-apostles; we discover that he possessed superior qualifications and opportunities for learning and presenting the real inner history of the whole movement, that issued in the establishment of Christianity.

In this he was peculiar, that he was not so carried away with the displays of divine power in the miracles, as was Peter. His faith in Jesus did not rest upon these signs as its only basis. While Peter describes them as though they were still enacting under his eyes, with a pen almost palsied with wonder; John finds other deeper wonders; and enters as it were within the veil to behold the divinity enshrined within. He recounts miracles indeed, and intimates that they were well nigh past numbering; but mentions only six in the life of the Savior, and one occurring after his resurrection. He relates the first miracles and the last for evident reasons. Besides them he enumerates only those which so irritated the rulers and the nation as to lead to their utter rejection of him and to his crucifixion: the cure of the impotent man at Bethesda; the feeding of the five thousand, and the rejection of the temporal crown; the restoration of sight to the man born blind; and the raising of Lazarus; which may all be classed among the causes of their causeless enmity against him, which he vividly portrays from its inception to its fearful culmination.

John found in his master something more amazing and convincing than the power of miracles. It is plain that our Lord relied upon miracles simply as a means of arousing and fastening the attention; it was the apprehension of the vital saving truth of his own divine personality, that attached this disciple by indissoluble bonds.

John's faith in his master rested on Jesus' own descriptions of his relation to the eternal Father. There is an unapproachable sublimity in some of Christ's expressions, which John has preserved for us, and a self-evidence which seals their truth e. g. in his Ch. V:34: "I receive not testimony from man." These words were used by him when he cited the Sanhedrin to the witness of the Baptist to himself, to which he referred only as it might be helpful to their

conviction and salvation: yet he enters his protest respecting such testimony as involving an infinite stoop in himself to receive it. Men, who "are of yesterday and know nothing," who "are nothing and a thing of nought" and ignorant of the boundless eternity past, were not competent to testify of their own origin; much less of him. The first-born angel could only assert that when he awoke to consciousness he found HIM being. As Bartimeus restored to sight found his eyes opened upon the mighty Savior, as the first object on which they rested, so the oldest seraph when called out of the womb of nothingness found before him the creating Son of God, the executive of the Trinity, and could bear only the same witness with John: "*He was before me.*"

The only being in the universe, whose testimony Jesus would allow, was the everlasting Father, whose word should compel the assent of men unhesitatingly; yet even this was not needed for the assurance of Jesus. When the Father audibly spoke Jesus said: "this voice came not because of me, but for your sakes." He needed no recognition from the Father on his own account. Who is this who spurns all testimony save that of God alone, and needs not that for himself? Such superiority was never claimed or even imagined save by Jesus: none other could use such language or entertain such a thought.

His only companion was the Father; the men, who were associated with him, were not companions for him. There is record of a prisoner who in the solitude of his dungeon cultivated the acquaintance of a spider, taught the insect, fed him from his rations, and took pleasure in its society; so Jesus tabernacled in our flesh, and companied with men, who were less than nothing and vanity. His only associate was the Father.

So in speaking of his miracles he in only one instance refers to them as mighty works in the sight of men; he speaks of them as "*the works*" which the Father had given to do. They were no exhibitions of his power. To gain some adequate impression of his power it would have been necessary to stand with him when he was, and beside him nothing else; when even space and time were not; and to

hear him call to the universal emptiness, and to see all things come at his voice. The works which he performed on earth were a part of his humiliation, a confining of omnipotence to such works as became a human prophet, and such only.

In this gospel each of the first eleven chapters is a distinct picture, and each represents one stage of the ministry: and the scene shifts from one to the other without much historical connection: the whole forming a panorama of the successive periods grouped into a history. John received his Lord's testimony respecting himself, and therefore believed in him as the eternal son of the eternal Father, and concludes his gospel with: "Those things have I written write you, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ; and that believing ye may have life in his name."

These historians were not men of genius, endeavoring to produce effect by a high wrought tale. Having the necessary materials for the most exciting account conceivable, they do not use them. They are not fine writers making out a case; they tell their story without one single word of description, and speak of the most exciting events without one word of passion. Like their master, they render blessing for cursing, and meet all the anger of an opposing world with the most unfeigned and astonishing prayers for the forgiveness of opposers. They do not exhibit themselves. Mark and Luke do not even give their own names: and it is only from internal evidence of the most incontrovertible kind, that we discover the hand of Peter in the second gospel at all. It relates nothing good of him, nor any of the commendations which he received; but gives fully the great sin, and the terrible reproofs administered by the master, even classing him with Satan. There is enough of apparent disagreement in their accounts to acquit them of all collusion. These discrepancies are only apparent; they are all capable of satisfactory reconciliation, and taken together make a marvelous history of "the wonderful, the counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father," who was born a child of our common humanity, and given as a son of the race; "to make an end of sins, and to bring in everlasting righteousness," and to bear the government upon his shoulder.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE TESTIMONY OF HISTORY.

No subject fills a larger space in the literature of the centuries since the advent, than the Nazarene and the church which he founded. This church continued sound in its acceptance of the great facts of Christianity as set forth in the Apostles' Creed, which, though of later origin than the apostles' time, embodied the great truths which they taught. It utters no philosophy; but simply recites facts, not even stating with distinctness the trinity of the divine persons.

The prevailing heathen philosophy of the age was the Gnostic, which immediately took up Jesus, and constructed its own theory of his personality, and the reason of his appearance on the earth. Some of these philosophers assumed the name of Christian; and attached themselves to the infant church; among whom was Cerinthus during the life-time of the apostle John, who was Christian only in name; not accepting Christ's own description of himself and his errand. This adoption of Jesus by partisans of the Gnostic philosophy is as incontrovertible evidence of his real existence and acts, as the warmest confession of him by the church could possibly be; and completes the chain of testimony from the earliest days down to the reign of Adrian; from which period onward, literature has hardly another subject than Christianity and the church. The unbroken succession of evidence is perfect.

It is interesting to note the unanimity, with which the Gnostics for three centuries agree in denying to Jesus the possession of a gross material body. According to them he had but the mere semblance of a body, an ethereal vehicle of his divinity, which bore the perfect form of humanity, and nothing more. To this phantom body the

divinity united itself at his baptism, and forsook it at his arrest and condemnation; leaving in the hands of his enemies only the empty form of man. While residing in this image of humanity, the divinity uttered the sayings, and wrought the works of mercy attributed to Jesus in the gospels. This theory contains a most wonderful admission.

When we call to mind that the Gnostics considered the body to be the seat of sin, enslaving by its lusts and appetites the nobler and immortal soul; and that evil has its origin in matter; the denial to Jesus of a material body was a confession by heathen philosophy of the absolute sinlessness of the Redeemer, and the celestial purity of his spiritual being. No deeper and more pervading impression was ever made upon mortals, than was made by the appearance of this mysterious holy visitant. It may be considered established, that there was about him an air of purity, elevation and spirituality never before or since paralleled, and in consequence a dignity and grace beyond description. The wonder aroused did not subside or abate much for three centuries; and even pagan philosophy accounted for his illustrious purity, by contending that the gross animalism of our common humanity was lacking in him.

Gnosticism added still another confession respecting him. With the polytheistic notions current at the time, the Gnostics imagined a conflict to exist among the gods. The god of the Jewish people was contending against Jesus, and secured his arrest and crucifixion. In this supposed conflict they assigned to Jesus the position of the supreme deity, thereby showing the depth of the impression he had made. All this theorizing was among outsiders and philosophers, while vast multitudes received the teachings of the gospel in their purity, as expressed in the only current creed of the time, the Apostles' Creed.

During these centuries the truth was being "crushed to earth" by ten successive bloody persecutions: yet did it "rise again" stronger after every struggle. In the last of these persecutions, Dioclesian flattered himself that he had destroyed every copy of the Christian Scriptures, and had

exterminated every disciple of the Nazarene; but in the very next generation following, Christianity was stronger than ever; and took possession of the throne of the Roman empire, and sat in the seat of the Cæsars. From this point onward the history of the church became the history of the world, and the whole civilized earth was summoned at intervals of less than a century to successive councils, in order to canvass some particular in connection with the personality of Jesus, and define his true nature and standing.

Since the conversion of Constantine Jesus has for sixteen centuries monopolized the attention of the civilized world, having for the three previous centuries been conspicuous for the opposition which he caused until society quaked to its very foundations. The sword that smote the master was hardly sheathed for three hundred years: and was the author of the greatest sensation of the ages but an imaginary person as some infidels would fain believe? We are not saying too much when we say that he is the burden of history; and that its report comes to us in an unbroken chain from his age to the present. Thus far our attention has been given to those outside the pale of the church, which, numbering its members by multitudes, continued in the apostles' doctrine, and in fellowship, purified by the fires of persecution, undivided by sects, and comparatively free from error. From this date our knowledge of the church is minute.

The first heresy that seriously agitated was the Arian heresy, which developed about three hundred years after Christ, when the unparalleled impression of his person and life had faded out of memory. Previous to this, Sabellianism had appeared, and had found many supporters in North Africa, where its author had lived and preached. This system denies all distinction between the persons in the Godhead: and contends that the same identical person acts as father; comes to the earth as Son; and operates as the Holy Ghost. While this theory of Sabellius overlooks the fact, that distinct personal acts are ascribed to the three persons in the Scriptures, yet it was not considered fatal to salvation; inasmuch as it did not attack the deity of the Son, or detract at all from his dignity; but the whole

church felt the blow when Arianism took form, and openly proclaimed him to be a mere creature; though the highest ever brought into being. The horror excited by the bare suggestion of his inferiority, is a convincing proof of the orthodoxy and purity of the church of that age, which is founded upon the rock of his absolute divinity. The zeal of Athanasius and his sympathizers shows, that they were sensible that this heresy aimed its stab at the very vitals of Christianity.

The theory takes advantage of our Savior's humility expressed in so many of his discourses. "My Father is greater than I," "the son can do nothing of himself," "I can of mine own self do nothing," and "the Father sent the son to be the Savior of the world."

To meet and defeat this blighting error, the emperor himself was persuaded that the sentiment of the church universal, expressed in a unanimous condemnation, would have far more force than his own simple authority. The memory of Constantine merits our veneration on this account; that he desired the decision of the Holy Spirit dwelling in his church concerning this heresy; on the ground that condemnation by the infallible church would be more efficacious than the decree of an emperor, and would carry the weight of a divine judgment in the case. Much as we abhor the teachings of the Roman church, yet the true church of the present is, according to the promise of its head, infallible in matters of faith.

These convictions in Constantine gave rise to the first ecumenical council, which was held at Nice in Bithynia, A. D. 325. This was the largest of the ancient councils, to which bishops from the whole civilized world were summoned; and the one in which the fairest expression of conviction was honestly sought, and not procured by intrigue or reward; as was the case in some of the subsequent councils. This council at Nice affords an example of an honest and conscientious declaration of the truth according to the teachings of the holy word. The sentiments of Arius were condemned, and he was banished; and a very strong orthodox creed was adopted and promulgated as follows:

“I believe in one God the Father almighty, the maker of all things, visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the son of God, begotten of the Father, only begotten i. e. of the substance of the Father, God of God, light of light, very God of very God; begotten not made; of the same substance with the Father; by whom all things were made that are in heaven, and that are on earth: who, for us men and for our salvation, descended, and was incarnated, and became man; suffered and rose again the third day; ascended into the heavens: and will come to judge the living and the dead: and in the Holy Spirit. But those who say that there was a time when he was not; and that he was not, before he was begotten; and that he was made out of nothing; or affirm that he is of any other substance or essence; or that the son of God is created or changeable, the Catholic church pronounces accursed.”

So the heresy was strongly condemned; but after about five years the emperor, becoming convinced that Athanasius and others had been instigated by personal enmity against Arius, rather than zeal for the truth, did, of his own movement, without advice or consent of a council, annul the decree against him, and recall him from banishment. Returning to Constantinople, he entered the city in triumph, proceeding towards a church which had been assigned to him; but being forced to leave the procession formed in his honor, he retired into a public outhouse on the way, and died there in an unnatural and tragic manner. The ancients regarded his death as a judgment of God; but the moderns have suggested poison. It is related that he discharged his own bowels. No known poison effects this. Constantine died shortly after; and during four succeeding reigns, there were bitter and protracted contests; the issue being that the Arians were everywhere overcome and dispossessed, until the heresy was extinguished.

While there was a general acquiescence in the decisions of the Nicene council respecting the divinity and equality of the Son; yet there had been a lack of explicitness respecting the third person of the Godhead, whom Arian senti-

ments undeified also; as the denial of the divinity of the Son dethrones the Holy Spirit likewise. Therefore it became necessary soon to assemble another ecumenical council, in order to define the true doctrine of the Trinity, and especially to declare the personality and full equality of the Holy Spirit; and thus complete and perfect the work of the previous council.

This second council settled the doctrine of the Trinity of persons in the Godhead, as it has continued to be received to the present day, a matter of pure revelation, which defies all attempts of men to explain, or hardly to illustrate.

When God condescends to make a revelation of the mode of his own existence, mysteries may be looked for, which human wisdom cannot fathom; their absence would condemn the revelation at once as unworthy of reception. Mystery is connected with everything which we believe.

After a brief season of quiet, the next heresy had its origin from Nestorius bishop of Constantinople. There being no longer a diversity of opinion respecting the deity of Christ; speculation was busy about the union in him of the two natures. A presbyter of Nestorius refused to Mary the title of "mother of God;" as only his manhood was derived from her flesh. This was a sound and well taken criticism, and Nestorius approved of it; but in the controversy to which it gave rise he was naturally led to make the distinction between the two natures as wide as possible. In the heat of debate he took grounds, which distinguished and separated the humanity from the divinity by too wide a breach; contending that the natures being so utterly diverse could not really be united; and that in fact they were not united except in will and affection. According to his own theory there was rather a conjunction of the two natures; or in other words the humanity was a person in the hands of the divinity. He thus made Christ a compound of two coöperating personalities. This was a very grave error; the humanity of our Lord had no personality; it was a nature and not a person; and the two natures in him were not in conjunction merely; but united by a congenital vital and indissoluble union. Oil and water, iron and clay can

be mixed but never united; but in our Lord the two natures were really and truly united in one person.

There is too great a tendency in our day to separate the natures, and attribute some sayings to the humanity alone: and assign others to the divinity solely. It is more proper to teach that the complex personality gave utterance to the sayings, in which the tone of both natures distinctly sounded. For instance, when upon the cross he said "I thirst," he not only spoke as man suffering from privation of drink; but as God fulfilling previous prophecy, and affording to his enemies the opportunity of manifesting the bitterness of their cruelty and scorn, by offering him vinegar mingled with gall, and refusing him a drop of water in his torment. When he said: "thy sins be forgiven thee," he could not utter this as God simply. God can never forgive sin, except as an atoning mediator. It is doubtful if any word of his can be selected, in which both natures did not speak. The "I" is an indivisible factor, whose dissection is never allowed. So in our Lord, as in ourselves, there was but one indivisible I: and all that he said or did proceeded from that indivisible source. Divinity was in every act and word, and equally did humanity contribute its share.

It may not be proper to pronounce that the humanity alone handled the saw and axe in the shop at Nazareth. The divinity coöperated in every labor, and in every utterance, maintaining always the proper concealment. So it may not be correct to say that the humanity alone wept at the grave of Lazarus: the tears expressed the sympathy of Jehovah as well. Neither nature acted separately: the composite being spoke and acted in every case from both sides of his personality as an indivisible unity. There was more than a sympathy between the two natures: there was a vital union.

Who shall say that in his sufferings at the last humanity alone had part? "It were a bold position to affirm that all the self-denial and endurance of suffering, which are the high expression of love in this stupendous work of atonement, belonged solely to the human nature of Christ."*

*Dr. E. N. Kirk, of Boston, Mass.

How strong are some expressions of the Holy word: God "purchased us with *his own* blood." "*He* gave his life for us." While learning and philosophy have decided that the divine nature is impassible; the common mind of Christendom has ever taken a different view, and probably does still.

The opponents of Nestorius were naturally disposed to proceed to the opposite extreme, according to the common infirmity of the human mind. The heresy was soon formulated, which asserts that in the union of the two natures in Christ, the divine, from its overponderance, minimized and absorbed the human: so that in him there was really but the one nature.

In this departure the leader was Entyches, also a presbyter of Constantinople. Before this period the same theory had been broached: the younger Apollinaris had insisted, that in Jesus the divinity supplied the place of a rational, intelligent soul; and that Christ's assumption of humanity consisted only in the taking upon him of a material body.

The statements of the Scripture are explicit upon this point, that: "It behoved him to be made in all things like unto his brethren." "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the nature of the seed of Abraham." "Both he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." "For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are yet without sin." Throughout the New Testament he is called the Son of Man, twice as often as he is called the Son of God; agreeing to the idea of his full humanity.

So an evident necessity existed for another council, which was called to meet at Ephesus; but which was so conducted as not to merit the confidence of the church: though its decisions are regarded as orthodox. After an interval, still another council was called to meet at Chacedon, A. D. 451, which settled for all time the definition of the person of Christ; that he was God and man, two natures in one person, and that the two natures were united without confusion, or change, indivisibly and inseparably forever.

When two cognate species, whether of plants or animals, amalgamate and interpropagate, the hybridized offspring is quite dissimilar to both parents, being an entirely new product resulting from a confusion of the races; and is a monster defective in important respects. The uncreated not being capable of such amalgamation with a mere creature, the union of the divinity and the humanity is of an altogether different type: the two natures remain distinct; but are really and truly united into one person, without confusion or change. The divinity was not reduced, nor was the humanity enlarged; but they were associated in one indivisible person forever. Our Lord was neither a demi-god, nor a divine man.

In the original creation of man, human nature was constituted to meet this very contingency. Man's spiritual nature is specially adapted and prepared with such a quality as to render this union with divinity possible. Man is a perfect miniature (of) God, and his nature is a suitable vehicle for the divinity: not merely a temple for his indwelling, but a speculum or prism qualified to transmit all the rays of divinity in their glorious effulgence: which may not be true of the nature of any of the angelic races. In short, the image of God, in which Adam was created, may include more than the knowledge and true holiness with which he was endowed.

There remains but one more error to confute pertaining to the personality of the Savior; and it is an error which reappeared again and again in the philosophies of successive centuries. The Eutychians of the fifth century are quite similar to the Monophysites of the sixth, and the Monothelites of the seventh century.

This heresy in its last form denied to his humanity the possession of a separate will, or of its separate operation: thus depriving it of one of its essential faculties, and teaching that a defective human nature was taken into alliance with the divinity. That his humanity was full in its equipment of every endowment belonging to its proper constitution, is just as certain as that his divinity suffered no diminution. That it possessed its own operation of will is clear from the view of the two wills, which we gain

in the story of Gethsemane; where we behold the humanity shuddering, hesitating, praying to be delivered; yet finally submissive and concurrent. In that scene a full and not a defective humanity appears. He possessed a nature in its entirety a model of our own. Perfect man and perfect God in one person, he was qualified for the great work of redemption. As the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in him bodily, not emptied of its omniscience, nor of its omnipresence, nor of any of its attributes: the immutability of the divine nature forbids such suppositions: so was there the fulness of the manhood without any deduction. He has taken into union with himself the lowest grade of intelligent creatures, through which to furnish the clearest and most affecting disclosure of himself. Humanity is thus honored with the highest distinction, and is to become the vehicle of all future revelations of the Godhead, which may be vouchsafed. Thus as we have recited for four centuries, history has no other theme, until the final settlement at Chalcedon of the real personality of Jesus Christ.

Was the world thus agitated over an imaginary personage, who never had a real existence? Is history an unbroken tissue of mythical or legendary fables? Was there no original cause of the fierce persecutions, the bloody contests, and the warring philosophies of the past centuries? The very philosophies of the past prove the existence of Christ and his doctrine. New Platonism had never been, had not Christianity been; nor would Eclecticism; both demonstrate the existence and wide influence of Christianity, being hybrid systems, adapting Paganism to gospel truth. The destructive influence of false philosophy upon Christianity can hardly be appreciated.

The world waited until the first James of England before a true Christian method of philosophy was introduced. Gnosticism, Platonism, Aristotelianism were in turn discarded. The world is indebted to Jesus Christ for the Christian, the Baconian philosophy; it is the offspring of his gospel.

Successive councils added nothing to the received conceptions of the God-man; and the way was rapidly preparing

for the great Roman apostasy. Rome, having lost the imperial headship of the world, assumed by gradual encroachment the ecclesiastical supremacy, and perpetuated the Roman ascendancy, with powers vastly increased. "The beast that thou sawest was, and is not, and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition." It became the bloodiest enemy of true Christianity that the world has ever seen. When John "saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus," he "wondered with great admiration;" because the woman was the professedly Christian church. Though "driven into the wilderness," the true church has survived; and still counts an unbroken succession from its Pentecostal commencement to the present day. That it has outlived such mighty vicissitudes, is an infallible proof of the actual existence upon earth of Jesus Christ, and an earnest of its universal triumph.

The martyrdom of Stephen is a reproduction of the death of his master, and a standing proof of its occurrence just as related. In it we behold a man standing for the truth against an opposing world, whom the fear of death could not dismay, nor turn in the slightest degree from the path of his convictions. Though he knew that the price of integrity was his blood, "having done all" he stood; and when the sacrifice took place, in his supreme agony, like the Holy One for whom he died, he rose to his knees, and prayed for his enemies; and especially for the young man, who was the chief instigator of the deed. The death of Stephen proves the great exemplar which he was following.

So likewise the martyrdom of Peter, in humble resemblance of his Lord's, establishes the fact of the real life and death of his master. An unbroken succession of such followers and imitators marks the history of three hundred years; and while martyrs were numbered by the hundred thousand, each one the strongest conceivable witness of the actual existence of their great prototype, in the times when his memory was fresh in the minds of men; we must consider that their number might have been multiplied a

thousand fold; for every genuine believer was just as ready to give up all for Jesus, as those who were called to yield their lives.

Neither is the chain now broken in this age of formality; but if the same sacrifice were required now, there are millions who would rise up and surrender life for him. As Napoleon said: "I shall die and men will forget me; but there are thousands now who can never forget Jesus; but would die for him instantly, if required. Jesus died, but do you call this dying?" No character in history, and no events are more incontrovertibly established by all manner of indubitable evidence, than the existence of the Nazarene, and the history of his life, and death and teachings as recorded. Accepting this testimony, we stand upon the Rock of Ages, and feel that if anything on earth is certain: "this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, "even the thief."

He came into the race, not being one of them, upon an errand of nameless mercy. No devil nor liar ever forged the tale: the scheme was born in the heart of God, and comes to us accredited by his own authority. It seems almost more than man can believe, and too good to be true; but our salvation is suspended upon our hearty credence. Unbelief is the damning sin, the separating sin, the unpardonable sin when it reaches to malignity.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE WORLD COULD NOT CONTAIN THE BOOKS. JNO. XXI,

The word translated *contain* is in other passages translated to *receive* and to be received. It also describes the manner of reception as in 2 Cor. vii: 2: "receive us, we have wronged no man," where it evidently means to receive with confidence and affection. John's assertion then amounts to this; that the history of the Nazarene was an inexhaustible subject; but that a multiplication of similar accounts of healing, all agreeing in the same result of instantaneous relief to the suffering, could not add to the conviction of the inquirer; *or be received with advantage*. It was not necessary to see all his works, in order to believe in him.

Perhaps there is in the apostle's words a further thought: that the whole *could* not be told; that the wonderful character was so entirely above what had ever been seen on earth, so elevated, so holy, that it was impossible to describe him fully. It was simply impossible to communicate in words of earth the actual beauty and grace of the matchless hero of the memoirs. The apostle was indeed repudiating his own account of him as meagre, and unworthy of the subject, who infinitely surpassed the lofty, ideal of the most spiritual imagination. As art has never been able to devise a representation of his physical person satisfactory to the designer himself; so the apostle speaks as one affording us a glimpse and only a glimpse of the indescribable one in his spiritual beauty.

The four evangelists seem to be giving us each his own personal experience in reaching the full conviction of the supreme divinity of his Master. Instead of attempting to overwhelm the reader with a tale of wonders, all but one omit the supernatural credentials of the forerunner, and the

wonders attending the birth of Jesus. But one makes mention of the miraculous star, and the wise men from the east: and one only mentions the angel of the resurrection: but one describes the ascension. In their combined account there may be grave omissions. The great outline points in the history of the Master's life, each was under obligation to rehearse; however limited in other respects his narrative might be. These specific points, all have made the material of their respective histories.

Out of the vast amount of other matter each has made his selection according to the dominant purpose in his own mind. Each is full of a *single* thought; and has in his mind a *single* aim. To Matthew Jesus is the long expected King, verified by the exact and minute fulfillment of the ancient prophecies. As a Jew he gives his descent in the regal line through his legal father; and reminds his readers continually of an authority in him that could not be concealed. He alone uses the phrase kingdom of heaven, and the royal tone and the authoritative decision are heard in every discourse: the kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, over the invisible as well as the visible.

Peter, the real author of the second gospel, describes Jesus as the man of action. His tireless industry, indefatigable zeal and resistless might stamped themselves upon his memory indelibly. He was the man to take note of these very characteristics. He gives us a more vivid impression of the unparalleled energy and power of the great miracle worker. A few of the signal miracles and interviews of the master, he details at length with a particularity and force not found in the other accounts. His one thought is the resistless power.

In like manner Luke was full of one grand conception. Being a Gentile, he with Matthew has preserved for us one of the designations of the Nazarene by his enemies: "the friend of publicans and sinners;" intended for a harmful slander, but really containing a divinely glorious gospel truth. His selection of parables and facts has continual reference to this aspect of his Lord's character; and his history is but a commentary upon this then novel and surprising gospel.

The one object of the fourth writer seems to be to detail the enmity of his nation against their divine Messiah from its inception to its fearful culmination. He has recited but six of the miracles: the first, because it was the first: and the last for a similar reason, and because it was wrought upon an enemy in arms against him. He has selected the four intermediate miracles for his history, which inflamed the enmity of the Jewish rulers and people to the utmost intensity of hatred, and led to his rejection and crucifixion. With this description of Jewish hatred, he has combined the most sublime and convincing announcements of the Savior's real standing and supreme divinity.

No history could possibly be written more bare of description than the four gospels. They read like notes taken by some spirit from another sphere, unmoved by human sympathies, and recording without comment. Not a mark of blind partisanship can be detected; not the faintest trace of prejudice against the persecutors; nor the least shading of national bigotry. The muse of history was recording with the pen of truth, aloof from all the passionate agitations of the hour. In short the four gospels are devoid of human weaknesses and bias, and radiant with truth.

It is not probable that one thousandth part of the miracles are recorded; for on three or more distinct and separate occasions our Lord is described as surrounded by an eager throng of diseased, deformed and crippled subjects, awaiting his arrival, who are pressing to touch him; and every one who succeeded in touching but the thread of his garment's fringe is perfectly and permanently restored, whatever his calamity may have been. In the midst of a crowd he stands as a fountain of life, not impoverished by giving. Such a company never awaited the arrival of the great and powerful to greet them with a parade of their misery.

When these miracles were wrought singly, each one had its own separate history. The various methods, by which our Lord elicited, or assisted and strengthened faith where it existed, which form the most interesting portion of the story, remain untold. His methods were as diversified as the classes of the human family.

An interesting instance is that of the blind man, whom he led by the hand out of the city of Bethsaida to the shade of some grove in the vicinity. This man had once enjoyed the blessing of sight now lost; and seems to have had very little faith in the possibility of its recovery. His friends believed for him. Our Lord touched his eyes with his own spittle, and permitted him to perceive a faint glimmer of daylight, by which he saw the trunks of the surrounding trees, and also men, whom he was able to distinguish to be men, only by their motion in walking. If this return of sight lasted only for a few moments, it was enough to convince him of the power of the operator; and to awaken an eager faith, and a keen desire; and thus prepare him to receive the blessing of perfect sight, granted. as all the gifts of Jesus were, to faith only. His varied treatment for securing this faith in the respective cases forms the most instructive portion of the gospel narrative.

And then the evangelists make no mention of the gratitude of the recipients of his favors. There are but three cases mentioned, in which any display of gratitude is recorded. These are the two anointings and the worship of the Samaritan leper. These are made matters of history simply because a lesson was connected with each. Doubtless the most enthusiastic emotions of rapturous gratitude uttered with the greatest transports of joy were common. The man lame from his mother's womb, mentioned in Acts III. ch., as healed by Peter and John, was by no means excessive in his demonstrations. His happiness from the relief which he had experienced could not be contained; and could only find due expression in the most extravagant indulgence of his newly attained ability.

Unquestionably demonstrations, which a cold world would pronounce frantic, and praises offered to God with all the strength of voice possible, and prostrations at the feet of Jesus, with the most affecting signs of felt obligation, were so common as to be passed over in the written narrative in utter silence. The writers have not tarried upon any of the incidental circumstances, or loaded their pages with anything beyond the bare facts. No comment of the historian is added. Testimony in the purest and

most solemn court on earth, could not be more free from inadmissible accompaniments, and sustained by facts only. The individuality of each writer guided in the selection of his facts: the four combined present a full view of the central figure: but more may be withheld than is disclosed, which if added would only confirm what we possess. But it is only a small fraction that we know.

There was a stage of his ministry, which may be justly named the stage of miracles; reaching from the time when the apostles were called to stated attendance upon him, to his rejection of the royalty; because miracles were of daily, perhaps of hourly occurrence, sometimes scores in an hour during that period of a year. The whole country was in motion, so to speak, and gravitating toward him with a centripetal attraction. The knowledge of his expected or actual presence at any point was sufficient to gather immense crowds in a short time, bringing with them the afflicted on beds or couches; until perhaps all the sufferers or nearly all in the land, received that relief which was far superior to any other worldly favor.

Further, no record is left of the miracles wrought by the disciples on their tours of preaching, nor by the seventy whom he afterwards sent out, with authority to perform all the works which he himself effected. These were as truly the works of the Christ, as those occurring by his presence. In each case their whole circuit was marked by the most striking demonstrations of divine power, which were equally amazing as the healing of the nobleman's son sick at Capernaum by the master in Cana of Galilee. Each demonstrated his power to be effective at the same moment in different and widely separated localities. His presence was with each pair wherever they might be, and his aid was manifest at the decisive moment in every case.

He thus probably reached every neighborhood in the land, and every family or at least every kindred throughout the borders of Israel; and left a witness of his power and mercy in every village or hamlet, perhaps in every group of relatives; so that possibly there may not have been an individual to be found in the country, who had

not before his eyes some living evidence among his friends or kin of the mighty power and tender compassion of the wonderful man of Nazareth.

As the political atmosphere was clear during the period of his ministry, and nothing of national importance was occurring to divert attention, our Lord must have monopolized the gaze not only of Judea, but of neighboring nations as well, of which Idumea and Tyre and Sidon are particularly mentioned; and others still in patristic history.

The evangelists make no attempt to describe HIM. In reading any book of biography or of history, it is common and almost unavoidable to form in our own mind an image of the actor or the hero about whom interest centers. The closest examination of the gospel records fails however to discover the slightest allusion, from which to infer anything about the personal appearance of Jesus of Nazareth. The narrative is remarkable in this respect: that while full information is afforded in matters pertaining to salvation, not an additional word is vouchsafed on subjects not contributing to this end. This fact illustrates the superintending agency of the divine spirit directing the writers. The world's apprehension of the Savior is to be spiritual only, and not in the least sensuous.

Human fancy cannot depict him. Our sin-besotted souls fail in all attempts to realize such a character. Imagination fails in the conception of a countenance luminous with absolute holiness: art has ever failed in the attempt to represent it. The common idea of perfect purity is that it is freedom from these vices, those weaknesses and the other temptations. Such are negative ideas; but a bundle of negatives does not form a picture at all. Holiness is something positive. Jesus was no negative character. God's holiness is like a consuming fire, it is the intense whiteness of the fiercest element of destruction known to man. If the face of Moses shone with light from communion with this being, and the reception of a little of his spirit, who can form a suitable impression of the face, from which the veil was removed but once for a short time on the Mount of Transfiguration; and it shone like the sun? What imagination can picture the countenance of him, who *cannot* lie,

who *cannot* hate, who does not look upon sin or behold iniquity? He could not be described; no pen could paint him.

To the many his presence was oppressive: it suggested contrasts with themselves, that were humiliating and painful; it recalled memories long since buried, and forebodings not easily silenced. His look had in it a rebuke sharper than the sting of conscience: and men turned away from him, as we turn our quivering lids from the midday sun. In his presence, judgment and doom were no longer far off matters, veiled in clouds of doubt; but nigh, at the very door. What fancy can see in vision that eye, which the greatest men in the nation could not endure? before which a conscious evil-doer could not stand? before which brave and hardened men went backward, and fell to the ground? It was an apprehension of this divine quality that subdued crowds, and gave an irresistible authority to his words.

What idea is attainable of a being absolutely pure from the slightest taint, looking upon society with a shrinking horror; yet yearning over it with the tenderest pity? This compassion was so deep and earnest; that its lines were written in large characters visible afar off on his mobile features. The words, "he was moved with compassion," so often repeated, "Jesus looking upon him loved him," his tears over his enemies, his dying prayer for his murderers, "Father, forgive them," exhibit a spirit, that, were the artist an angel, no imagination could picture, and no colors delineate. Tongues of clay can never tell it, nor pens of earth write it. He is still the unseen, the invisible: he is to be apprehended spiritually. A broken heart can still see him, by stooping low enough; but only through a lens made of tears.

Notwithstanding the silence of the evangelist, it may be confidently stated; that our Lord was beautiful. Attention has been directed in foregoing pages to passages which show that there was an ethereality about his appearance; suiting the only human body, that was never defaced or tainted by sin. The grossness of animalism, the disturbance of passion, the blight of evil had never defiled it. It

was "in the likeness of sinful flesh"; but it was still "that holy thing" unsoiled. A divine love in the soul of a sinful man illumines the features with its own impress; and is "an ornament of grace and a crown of glory;" giving its subject consummate ease and self-command in all circumstances, however trying.

So Jesus possessed a countenance at once majestic and winning, the utmost grace of manner, a living adaptation to all the demands of every occasion, the ingenuity and tact which affection breeds, and a facility of imparting instruction exactly to the point. Such an inward light would render features supremely beautiful, however coarse; but it is not necessary to suppose that in our Lord, there was any want of correspondence in form or feature with the refinement of his soul, or any deviation from true and perfect taste. Unquestionably the clay was beautiful, the expression of the intelligence made it more enchanting; and the indwelling soul lighted all with an indescribable lustre.

Further, every beholder must have been struck with the unearthly serenity of his aspect. The solid calm of heaven must have showed itself in that face, that was never disturbed by passion or worry. Himself the fountain of the "peace which passeth all understanding" was its most shining example. Peace, deep as the blue vault of heaven above, had its source in him, and made him imperturbable by any influence whatever. He felt only the Father's frown. Men, "careful and troubled about many things," are jostled out of level by the slightest jar; nothing had power to agitate him; not the passing away of the heaven and earth.

In forming our conception of his appearance, still another element is to be introduced: submission to the Father's will. For him to live upon this earth, which, as he often explained, was voluntary on his part, required a continual acquiescence in the will of another. This air of submission never left him: after the conflict in Gethsemane it lent a holy radiance to his countenance. In the experience of a mortal, the "joy unspeakable and full of glory" enters the soul at the moment of entire and prostrate submission to the will of a just and holy God; and "the crown of glory"

is on the brow. The height of holy exultation follows instantly the full surrender of the will to the pleasure of the most High. In the case of our Lord, the humanity hesitated at the prospect of the impending suffering; but submission had its perfect work. Love triumphed, and said: "If this cup may not pass except I drink it; thy will be done." His visage was glorified by the surrender. No halo was needed to distinguish him. It was this that so drew the gaze of Pilate. He was amazed at the silence of his prisoner; at the loftiness of his bearing, declining to answer; at the majesty, which shame and spitting could not defile; most of all, at the submission of the lamb in the midst of wolves, of innocence in the hands of murderers. The sight thrilled the Roman with feelings he had never known before, and drew his whole attention. Even after he had been informed; that the accused claimed to be divine, he declared with the most solemn emphasis: "I find in him no fault at all;" and almost begged that Roman soldiers might be excused from participating in the execution.

And then how meagre is the report of his words! The office of a miracle is simply to call attention to these, and illustrate them. The miracle is the finger of God pointing to the essential truth. The teachings are to exert their influence while the world remains; while the advertising miracle has but a transient office. These words of our Lord are to decide eternal destinies. They are as seeds cast into the soil of humanity to germinate through the centuries, whose fruit will yet be a millennium. They are like leads in the mining country conducting to hidden deposits of wealth. They are the leaven which Christ has cast into society, whose workings will agitate the mass with social upheaval and overturning, until the whole is leavened. These words are the sword which he came to send on the earth; the fire which he kindled, which will yet set the earth aflame. Through them a great light comes to us, revealing the full orb'd glory of the divine character, the before unknown principles of a true morality, and exhibiting true virtue, with all that relates to our destiny and doom. If anything connected with the great teacher should

have been reported in full; there could be no hesitation in saying, that this distinction should have belonged to the words; but all the teachings recorded, if comprised in a single pamphlet, dropping the words of the narrators, would not occupy the space of a single sermon of our day. We have brief specimens of his public discourses, of his private conversations, and his replies in the contests forced upon him; showing him to be the infallible discriminator of character, reading the heart with eyes of fire, withering the hypocrite as he did the fig-tree, and driving out the pretenders by the flash of his eye. We behold him also nursing the smoking flax into a flame, binding up the bruised reed, carrying the lambs in his bosom, and gently leading the oppressed. We have a world of theology in a nutshell of language; and windows are opened in heaven through which glimpses are obtained of the excellent glory. The evangelists must have been divinely assisted to convey to us in so small compass the great facts and bottom principles of Christianity with all needed directions for life and duty.

The first thirty years of his life are passed over in the histories, as containing nothing that could help us towards our own salvation; but as his divine personality is conceded, they become a most interesting part of his life. We only know that his childhood was spotless and pure; that he never came into angry collision with his fellows; never contended for his own rights against others; never called names as Raca; was never disobedient to parents; that in him was no guile. But these are but negative ideas; there was in him an overflowing kindness, which made him beautiful as a rose from Eden, and fragrant of the heaven from which he had come. .

His youth was pre-eminently lovely. Tempted, as we are in all points, he was never moved by evil companions. There are no worse savages in the western wilds, than boys of a certain age: bullies, tyrants, mockers, revilers, liars, mischief makers. Among all these, the boy of Nazareth passed undefiled. We gain a glimpse of him at twelve years of age in Jerusalem: not a street-runner, nor a sight-seer;

but remaining behind his company, as loth to leave his Father's house. His heart beat in high sympathy with his Father's business, even then. Old and hoary heads bent to him with respect; and the doctors were in ecstasies over his understanding and his answers. Such was the boy.

As he grew up, he became the reader in the synagogue: if this is not implied in the words of Luke, the information given in them is simply that he attended the synagogue service stately: a piece of unnecessary information. Such is a brief sketch of what is not communicated in the history left us. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law."



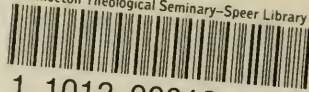
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